



Late Sunday evening...

I STILL DON'T
GET WHY SAM RAN
AWAY YESTERDAY!

IT'S POSSIBLE,
EVEN *LIKELY*, SAM
DOESN'T LIKE ME,
BUT ENOUGH TO
RUN?

IT'S NOT LIKE HE
HAD A PROBLEM BEING
AT THE COMIC SHOP
WITH ME THERE.

HE DIDN'T
USED TO,
ANYWAY.
MAYBE I'M
THE REASON
HE WASN'T
THERE ON
FRIDAY?

IS HE
JUST
AFRAID
I'LL TALK
TO HIM?

IF HE KNOWS
SARAH AND I ARE
FRIENDS, AND HE'S
WORRIED I'LL TELL
SARAH HE'S TRANS,
WHY WOULD WE
ALL HAVE TO BE AT
THE SHOP AT THE
SAME TIME FOR
THAT TO HAPPEN?

DOES HE
THINK I DON'T
KNOW THEY'RE
"NOT-DATING",
AND DOESN'T
WANT ME TO
FIND OUT?

THIS WOULD
BE SO MUCH
SIMPLER IF I
COULD TALK TO
SARAH ABOUT
IT, BUT IT
WOULD RAISE
TOO MANY
QUESTIONS!

I'D BE
BREAKING
MY PROMISE
TO SAM!

IF THIS IS
KEEPING SAM
FROM PLAYING IN
TOURNAMENTS,
AND STRESSING
HIM OUT ENOUGH
TO *RUN AWAY*, I
REALLY *SHOULD*
TALK TO HIM.

BUT I CAN'T
ASK SARAH FOR
HIS CELL PHONE
NUMBER WITHOUT
TELLING HER WHY.
AND IF HE'S
AVOIDING ME AT
THE COMIC SHOP,
HOW DO I...

WAIT... *THE SHOP!*

THAT'S HOW
I CAN GET
HIS PHONE
NUMBER!

Monday, early evening...

HEY GORDON, UM... I THINK I MIGHT'VE LEFT SOMETHING IN THE BACK...

GO AHEAD, BUDDY!

OKAY, SO I JUST LIED TO GORDON, THE MOST INNOCENT AND FRIENDLY OF ALL COMIC SHOP CLERKS...

...AND I'M ABOUT TO LOOK AT INFORMATION SAM GAVE US FOR RESERVING COMICS...

...BUT SAM MIGHT BE MISSING OUT ON TOURNAMENTS BECAUSE OF ME, AND THIS IS THE ONLY WAY I CAN THINK OF TO GET HIS NUMBER WITHOUT BETRAYING HIS TRUST!

WITHOUT BETRAYING HIS TRUST? HE TRUSTED THE STORE WITH HIS NUMBER, NOT ME!

YES, BUT NOW HE'S AVOIDING THE STORE BECAUSE OF ME. I'VE HURT HIM. I NEED TO MAKE THINGS OKAY!

I DON'T KNOW THAT FOR CERTAIN.

AFTER WHAT HAPPENED AT THE MALL? HE DIDN'T JUST WALK AWAY. HE RAN. FAST.

JUSTIN GOT ME THIS JOB. HE WOULDN'T WANT ME ABUSING MY POSITION HERE.

BUT I CAN'T ASK JUSTIN IF HE'D BE OKAY WITH THIS, BECAUSE I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO TALK TO ANYONE ABOUT THIS!

"YOUR POWER IS BEING THERE FOR PEOPLE WHEN THEY NEED YOU."

SAM DOESN'T NEED ME.

THIS IS WRONG.



IF SAM WAS IN TROUBLE, MAYBE I COULD JUSTIFY THIS, BUT...

I DON'T EVEN REALLY KNOW IF HE'S AVOIDING THE COMIC SHOP BECAUSE OF ME, AND IF HE IS...

...THAT'S HIS CHOICE, ISN'T IT?

I WANT TO TALK TO HIM, AND MAKE PEACE WITH HIM IF HE REALLY IS AVOIDING ME...



...BUT I'M ONLY IN THIS SITUATION BECAUSE I'VE **ALREADY** ACCIDENTALLY VIOLATED HIS PRIVACY ONCE.

I'M NOT GOING TO FIX THINGS BY VIOLATING IT **ON PURPOSE**.

THE RIGHT THING TO DO IS TO LEAVE SAM ALONE.



HEY, SAM!

ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!



NO! JUST STAY BACK HERE! MIND OWN BUSINESS! IF HE ACTUALLY WANTS TO TALK TO YOU, HE KNOWS WHERE YOU ARE EVERY FRIDAY!

HEY. ANY OF MY RESERVED COMICS IN?



WAIT, THAT SOUNDS... LIKE HIM, BUT...

I'LL CHECK!



COOL. THANK YOU.

GASP.



WHAT DO?

PRIVACY!

DANGER!

QUESTIONS I MIGHT BE ABLE TO ANSWER FOR HIM IF SO!

FAUSTIAN BARGAINS!

BUT PRIVACY!

ACTUAL DANGER, GRACE.



DAMMIT.

ANTENNAE OUT FOR
MAXIMUM GOODNESS WITH
FACES AND FIGURES...



LIGHTS OUT...

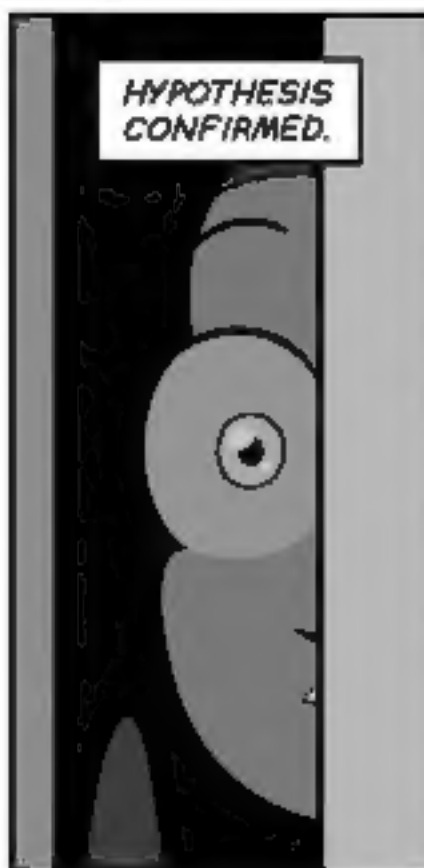
~CLICK~



TESTING HYPOTHESIS...



HYPOTHESIS
CONFIRMED.



SAM!

I'M REALLY SORRY TO
BOTHER YOU BUT THERE'S
SOMETHING I HAVE TO
TALK TO YOU ABOUT!



SOMEONE'S GIVEN
YOU A MAGIC MARK.
HAVEN'T THEY?







I'M GUESSING YOU NOTICED WHEN I RAN AWAY AT THE MALL.

AND WEREN'T AT THE TOURNAMENT LAST FRIDAY, WHICH DIDN'T SEEM LIKE A BIG DEAL BEFORE THE MALL.



I'VE BEEN LEARNING MAKEUP AND COSTUMES FOR PLAYS, AND LATER COSPLAY, SINCE *FIRST GRADE*. I'VE GOTTEN PRETTY GOOD AT IT, BUT YOU WERE ABLE TO TELL... MY "SITUATION" MONTHS AGO...



...AND YOU KNEW I'D BE ABLE TO TELL YOU'RE TRANSFORMED.



YEAH. WELL, THAT'S WHY I RAN AT THE MALL WITH THE TOURNAMENT, I WANTED TO GIVE EVERYONE A FEW WEEKS TO MAKE IT LESS LIKELY THEY'D NOTICE.

BETWEEN YOU AND GEORGE? THAT LAST TOURNAMENT WAS JUST A NO-GO.



ANYWAY, I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHO GAVE ME THE MAGIC MARK. THEY LEFT THEIR NAME IN A NOTE, BUT...

A NOTE?



YEAH, WHEN I WOKE UP TWO FRIDAYS AGO, THERE WAS A NOTE BY MY BED.

I DON'T CARRY IT AROUND WITH ME, BUT I TOOK A PICTURE OF IT...



"SAM, YOU DO NOT KNOW ME, BUT I HAVE GIVEN YOU A MAGIC MARK. IT IS HIDDEN BEHIND THE HAIR ON THE BACK OF YOUR HEAD."

"THIS MARK ALLOWS YOU TO TRANSFORM INTO YOUR TRUE SELF AND BACK AT WILL. THIS MIGHT FEEL HARDER TO DO IN A WEEK OR TWO, BUT YOU WILL STILL BE ABLE TO DO IT."

"I ASK NOTHING IN RETURN FOR THIS, AND ONLY LEAVE THIS NOTE SO YOUR FIRST TRANSFORMATION WON'T BE BY ACCIDENT."



"SINCERELY, PANDORA."



I-I'VE NEVER MET PANDORA MYSELF, BUT I KNOW OF HER. IT'S GOOD THAT IT WAS HER.



I WAS WORRIED ABOUT A "DEAL WITH THE DEVIL" SORT OF SITUATION WITH THAT WEIRDLY WHITE IMMORTAL WHO ACTUALLY REMINDS ME OF SATAN, BUT PANDORA?



SHE'S FINE. IT'S FINE.



ARE YOU SURE? THAT LOOK ON YOUR FACE WAS...

I WAS SURPRISED! PANDORA, SHE... SHE'S NOT PERFECT, BUT...



...SHE'S GOT SOFT SPOTS FOR THINGS! A-AND PEOPLE SHE CARES ABOUT, AND...



...PEOPLE WHO... CARE ABOUT HER, AND... SHE LEFT YOU THAT NOTE... SHE...



...SHE REALLY WAS TRYING TO DO SOMETHING NICE, SO YOU'RE FINE!

I-IT'S ALL...



IT'S FINE!

TWO FRIDAYS AGO.



THE MORNING AFTER
PANDORA TOLD SARAH SHE
WAS A GOOD FRIEND...



...AND THE MORNING AFTER
SHE SPOKE TO TEDD!



...PANDORA GAVE TEDD AND
SARAH MAGIC AT THE SAME
TOURNAMENT WHERE SARAH
MADE PLANS WITH SAM. SHE
KNEW ABOUT THE DATE!



PANDORA *COULD* HAVE
MARKED SAM THEN, AND
DECIDED TO GIVE HIM
THE NOTE LATER AFTER
SEEING SARAH OR TEDD...



...BUT SHE PUT SAM'S MARK
WHERE IT'S EFFECTIVELY
INVISIBLE, JUST LIKE SHE DID
WITH TEDD! SHE WOULDN'T
DO *THAT* AND THEN WAIT A
WEEK TO LEAVE A NOTE!



SHE *MUST* HAVE
GIVEN SAM THE
MARK THE SAME
MORNING SHE
LEFT THE NOTE!

IS THE WHOLE
REASON SHE
MARKED SAM
BECAUSE SARAH
WAS GOING ON A
DATE WITH HIM?

OR BECAUSE
SHE THOUGHT
TEDD WOULD
WANT HER TO?

A BIT OF BOTH?



I'M GUESSING YOU
RECOGNIZE THE NAME?

UH...





IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE IT'S FINE!



YOU'RE FINE! YOU REALLY ARE FINE!

THAT'S NOT WHY I'M...



... SHE'S GONE.

PANDORA'S GONE.



"GONE"?



SHE'LL BE BACK, BUT... DIFFERENT. I DON'T KNOW HOW DIFFERENT, BUT...



SHE SACRIFICED WHO SHE WAS TO STOP THE MONSTERS AT THE MALL TWO FRIDAYS AGO. AND MONSTERS ALL OVER THE WORLD, TOO.

SHE'S WHERE ALL THOSE LIGHTS IN THE SKY CAME FROM.



S-SORRY TO SCARE YOU, I JUST...

A-ANYWAY, THAT'S WHY I MADE THAT FACE.



HUG



SO, YOU'RE OKAY, AND YOU PROBABLY WON'T FIND IT MORE DIFFICULT TO USE YOUR SPELL ANYTIME SOON.

THERE'S THIS AMBIENT MAGIC THING GOING ON THAT MAKES IT EASIER THAT PANDORA WAS GOING TO HELP FIX, BUT..



A- ANYWAY, I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU! I'LL LEAVE YOU ALONE NOW!

WHAT? HEY!

YOU'RE NOT BOTHERING ME!



ITS JUST.. I WAS WORRIED ABOUT NOT RESPECTING YOUR PRIVACY AND... I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT.. YOU KNOW

NOT LIKE ME BECAUSE OF HOW WE MET



WELL, OKAY, YEAH, I DIDN'T LIKE YOU AT FIRST, BUT IT'S NOT LIKE I'M HOLDING A GRUDGE

NOT AFTER MONTHS OF YOU NOT SAYING ANYTHING ABOUT IT, OR TREATING ME ANY DIFFERENTLY, AND ESPECIALLY NOT GIVEN YOUR SUPER SHELTERED UPBRINGING!



MY SUPER SHELTERED WHAT NOW?

I WANTED TO KNOW HOW WORRIED I SHOULD BE ABOUT YOU KNOWING, SO I SORT OF ASKED AROUND THE SHOP ABOUT YOU



..AND ONE OF OUR REGULARS WAS THERE MY FIRST DAY OF HISTORY CLASS WHEN I FIRST LEARNED ABOUT WORLD WAR TWO AND CRIED

I'M GOING TO GO HIDE MY FACE FOREVER NOW

HEY, NOBODY WOULD JUST GUESS THERE'D BEEN A WORLD WAR WITHOUT BEING TOLD FIRST LET ALONE TWO!



I KNOW, BUT IT'S STILL SO EMBARRASSING.

I'M SORRY I ASKED AROUND



NO DON'T BE! IT'S ONLY NATURAL YOU DID! I'M SORRY FOR WHAT I DID!



THANK YOU, BUT... SEE'NG AS YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT ANYWAY, AND ABOUT MY MARK...



CAN I TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOME STUFF RELATED TO... THAT?



ME? WHY ME?

I MEAN, I GET ME FOR THE MARK, BUT THAT?



WELL, ASIDE FROM SEEMING LIKE A NICE PERSON...



I HAVEN'T TOLD ANYONE I'M TRANS. YOU ARE LITERALLY THE ONLY OTHER PERSON WHO KNOWS. AND I HAVE BEEN DESPERATE FOR SOMEONE TO TALK TO



I THINK I KNOW THAT FEEL'NG





SO YOU
REALLY
HAVEN'T
TOLD
ANYONE?

I HAVEN'T
REALLY BEEN
EAGER TO COME
OUT AGAIN.




RIGHT, RIGHT




WAIT, WHAT?

"AGAIN"?



YEAH... SEE I ALWAYS KNEW
I LIKED GIRLS AND I USED
TO... HAVE MISCONCEPTIONS
ABOUT LESBIANS.

I THOUGHT...




"YEAH, I'M MASCULINE.
I'M GAY THAT'S HOW
LESBIANS WORK? DUH."



SO A FEW
YEARS AGO,
I CAME
OUT AS A
LESBIAN.


SOME PEOPLE
WERE COOL
WITH IT, IT...
TOOK TIME FOR
OTHERS, AND
THE REST

IT WAS A LOT
TO GO THROUGH.



AND THEN...
I MENTIONED
EXPERIENCE WITH
PLAYS AND
COSPLAY?

I STARTED TO
REALIZE THERE WAS
PROBABLY A REASON I
ONLY WANTED TO PLAY
GUY CHARACTERS



AFTER EVERYTHING I WENT
THROUGH THE FIRST TIME, I
HAVEN'T BEEN EAGER TO SAY
"HEY, GUESS WHAT? I GOT IT
WRONG THE FIRST TIME!"

"I HOPE
YOU'RE AL...
OKAY WITH
THIS!"

IF THEY ACCEPTED
YOU AS A LESBIAN,
SHOULDN'T THEY
ACCEPT

THAT DOESN'T
GUARANTEE
ANYTHING.

A LOT OF PEOPLE
SEEM GREAT UNTIL
THE WRONG SUBJECT
COMES UP

THERE'S ALSO PEOPLE IN MY
LIFE WHO'D JUST LOVE TO
HEAR ME SAY I WAS WRONG
ABOUT BEING A LESBIAN,
AND... DISMISS WHAT I'VE
REALIZED SINCE THEN.

WHAT I'D REALLY
LIKE? NEVER COMING
OUT TO ANYONE

I WANT PEOPLE TO SEE
ME AS I AM AND JUST
BE COOL WITH IT

NO ASKING
FOR ANYONE'S
ACCEPTANCE

JUST BEING A MAN
WITHOUT EVER HAVING TO
EXPLAIN OR JUSTIFY WHO
I AM TO ANYONE

NO QUESTIONS,
NO JUDGEMENT

UH...

I'M SO SORRY
ABOUT WHEN WE
FIRST MET!

I-IT'S OKAY!
REALLY!



O-O-KAY...

SORRY



B-BUT THERE'S NO REAL GETTING AROUND COMING OUT AGAIN.

NOT UNLESS I WANT TO HIDE WHO I AM IN SOME WAY OR ANOTHER FOREVER.



AND NOW MY SECOND COMING OUT HAS THE COMPLICATION OF TELLING EVERYONE I CAN TRANSFORM.

NOT THAT I'M COMPLAINING



YOU'RE GOING TO TELL PEOPLE ABOUT THAT?



I'M NOT GOING TO NOT USE THIS MAGIC

THE GUYS AT THE COMIC SHOP MAYBE WON'T NOTICE OR CARE THAT I LOOK DIFFERENT AFTER A MONTH, BUT OTHERS WILL KNOW I'M NOT JUST DRESSING DIFFERENTLY



BUT YOU'RE NOT PLANNING TO DO IT ANY TIME SOON.

HECK NO. I AM IN NO HURRY IT JUST FEELS INEVITABLE.



AND MAYBE IT'S SELFISH, BUT I'D RATHER NOT BE THE FIRST PERSON WHOSE COMING OUT INCLUDES LITERAL MAGIC.

SORT OF HOPING SOMEONE BEATS ME TO THAT

WHICH... BRINGS US TO SARAH... YOU'RE FRIENDS WITH HER RIGHT?

SHE'S SUPER IMPORTANT AND WONDERFUL TO ME AND I WISH SHE LIVED WITH TEDD AND ME AND ALSO ELLEN AND WE'D ALL SLEEP ON A GIANT BEAN BAG TOGETHER AND CONSTANTLY INVITE FRIENDS OVER FOR SLUMBER PARTIES.

DOES SHE... I DON'T KNOW IF I'M CROSSING A LINE, HERE BUT DOES SHE KNOW ABOUT MAGIC?

YES.

AS IN, THE WAY YOU DO. BEYOND WHAT EVERYONE'S AWARE OF THESE DAYS.

UH OH. IS THAT CROSSING A LINE? I DON'T KNOW UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES... SHE'D PROBABLY WANT ME TO. ?

JUST LIMIT IT TO WHAT SAM WOULD REASONABLY GUESS.

SHE KNOWS ABOUT ME, SO YES.

SO SHE WOULDN'T BE TOO FREAKED OUT BY MY BEING ABLE TO TRANSFORM.

I WANT TO SAY "MILD SURPRISE"? I'M SURE SHE'D BE OKAY WITH IT

SO IT MIGHT NOT BE A DISASTER IF I TOLD HER

THOUGH I REALLY DON'T WANT TO.



I LIKE HANGING OUT WITH HER. SHE'S FUN, AND I FEEL LIKE I CAN BE MYSELF AROUND HER.

BUT LIKE I'VE BEEN SAYING, I DON'T REALLY WANT TO HAVE TO COME OUT TO ANYONE



I'D FEEL OBLIGATED TO TELL HER IF WE WERE IN A RELATIONSHIP.

...BUT I'M NOT SURE I'M EVEN READY TO DATE, OR IF SHE'S WHO I'D WANT TO DATE



SARAH IS A LOVELY GIRL.

YES, SHE IS, BUT... I LIKE THINGS PLATONIC BETWEEN US.



I DON'T KNOW IF I'M JUST NOT READY FOR DATING, OR IF I'D ALWAYS JUST WANT TO BE FRIENDS WITH HER, BUT THAT'S HOW I FEEL RIGHT NOW



I'M WORRIED SHE DOESN'T SEE THINGS THAT WAY, THOUGH.



AS SARAH'S FRIEND, I CANNOT DIVULGE ANYTHING SHE HAS PRIVATELY SHARED REGARDING HER FEELINGS ABOUT YOU



HOWEVER, IT MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA TO TALK ABOUT SOME OF YOUR FEELINGS WITH HER.

I WAS AFRAID OF THAT .

YOU KNOW, I ALMOST
CANCELED OUR FIRST "MAYBE
DATE" WHEN I FOUND OUT I
COULD TRANSFORM?

YOU D.D?
WHY?

BECAUSE I
JUST FOUND
OUT I COULD
TRANSFORM!

AND SOME MAGIC
PERSON HAD BROKEN
INTO MY ROOM AND
DONE SOMETHING
TO ME!

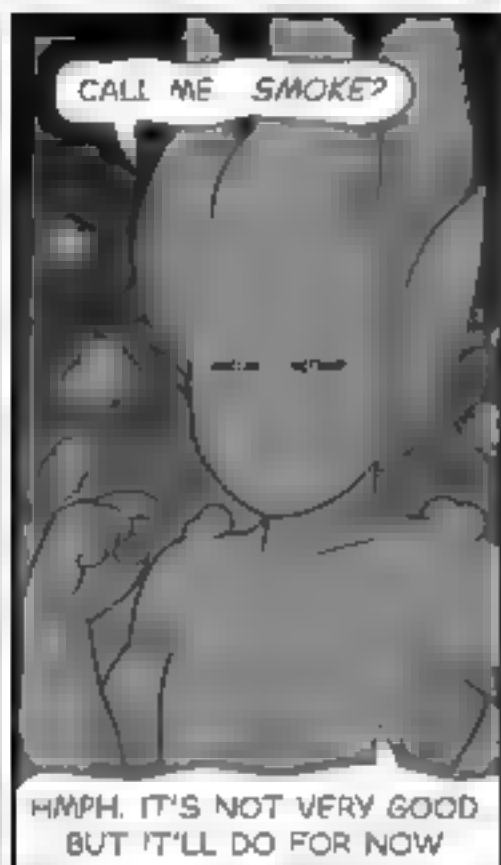
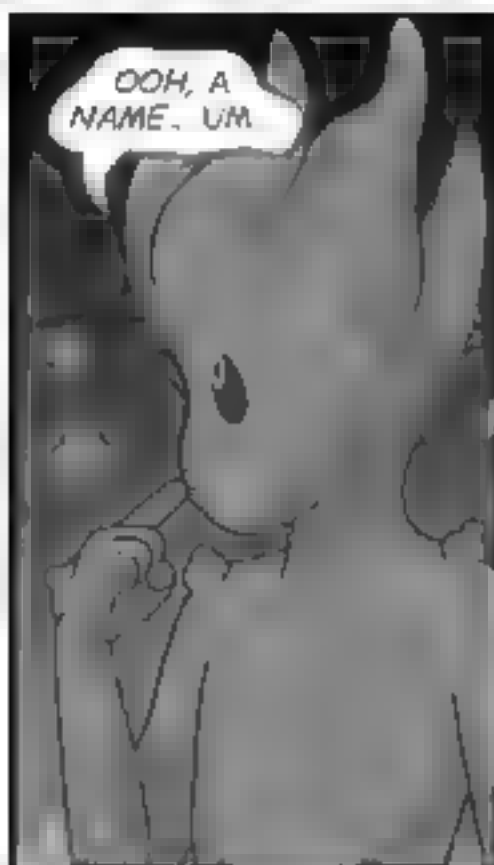
AND I WASN'T
SURE THE DATE
WAS A GOOD IDEA
TO BEGIN WITH!

I WAS
FREAKING
OUT IN SO
MANY
DIFFERENT
WAYS!

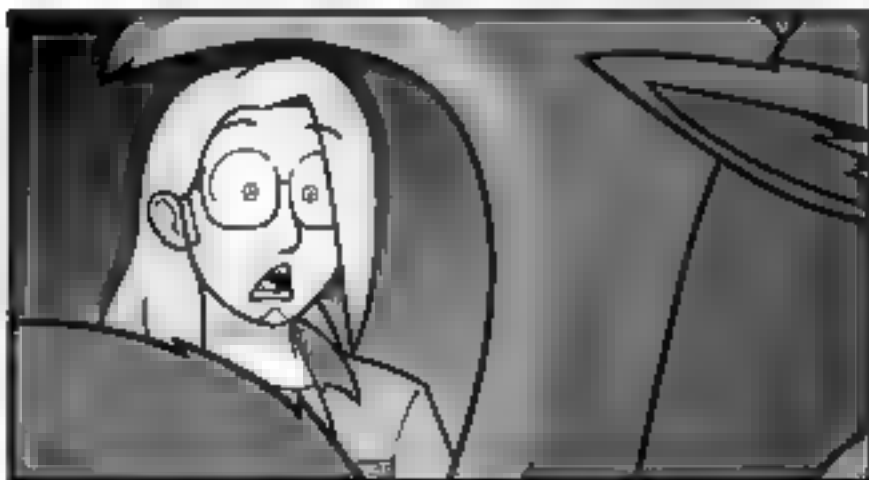
YOU CAN
TRANSFORM?!

I LOVE
TRANSFOR
MATION
MAGIC!

SHOW ME,
WON'T YOU?







OH, GEE IF
ONLY IT WAS
POSSIBLE TO
TRANSFORM
OH WAIT

EITHER *THAT*
CHICK IS CHEER-
LEADRA HERSELF
OR SHE'S *ANOTHER*
SUPER CHICK.

YOU SOUND
LIKE YOU'RE
TALKING ABOUT
SUPER POWERED
CHICKENS.



Meanwhile, literal miles away and entirely oblivious to Grace and Sam's situation, Camdin enjoys a sandwich...



and Smoke floats bewildered by what they've just witnessed



"WHAT KIND OF MAGIC?"

WHAT ARE YOU ?



WAIT CAN THEY TELL MY TRANSFORMATIONS AREN'T SPELLS?!



WAIT!



WHAT THEY REALLY WANTED WAS TO SEE A SPELL, AND THEY COULD TELL WHAT I DID WASN'T ONE



IF BEING PART ALIEN IS A
BIGGER DEAL THAN MAGIC

...DID I JUST LET
THE FATTEST CAT
OUT OF THE BAG?

ARE YOU OKAY?

UH...

YEAH...

I DON'T THINK ANYONE'S
AROUND, AND WE CAN'T
BE EASILY SEEN FROM A
DISTANCE HERE... SO...

BACK TO
NORMAL!

WELL, ONE
DEFINITION OF
NORMAL



WAS THAT...
A HUMAN?

I THINK
SO, YES.



BUT... SMOKE... I
MEAN... WHERE'S
YOUR *BRAIN* WHEN
YOU'RE *SMOKE*?

IT'S BEST NOT
TO DWELL TOO
MUCH ON THAT
SORT OF THING



ANYWAY, THERE ARE PEOPLE
WHO CAN LEARN OTHER PEOPLE'S
SPELLS BY OBSERVING THEM...

WIZARDS.

AND I THINK THEY'RE ONE OF
THEM. THAT'S WHY THEY WANTED
TO SEE YOU TRANSFORM.



WAIT, SO...
THEY CAN DO WHAT
YOU DID NOW?

NO. UH... NOT ALL SPELLS CAN
BE COPIED, AND I'M WEIRD IN THAT
NONE OF MINE CAN BE COPIED

I DON'T THINK THEY
KNEW THAT, AND NOT
BEING ABLE TO COPY
ME SCARED THEM.



WHICH IS
TRUE TEDD'S
SAID SOME
SPELLS CAN'T
BE COPIED.

IF MY TRANS-
FORMATIONS
LOOK THE SAME
TO A WIZARD AS
THOSE SPELLS,
MAYBE THAT FAT
CAT ISN'T OUT
OF THE BAG!

IF THAT'S THE
CASE, SMOKE'S
REACTION COULD
MEAN THEY'RE
SELF-TRAINED...



WELL, HELL THEY
SHOULD'VE JUST
BEEN UP FRONT ABOUT
WHAT THEY WANTED.

I'D GIVE
EVERYONE
THIS SPELL IF
I COULD

HEY, UM... I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL BE AT THE NEXT TOURNAMENT I MIGHT BE, BUT I WANT TO GIVE IT ENOUGH TIME THAT EVERYONE WILL BE LESS LIKELY TO REALIZE MY CHANGE, AND, UM...

...WOULD IT BE ALRIGHT IF WE MAYBE TALKED AGAIN ABOUT... STUFF, IN THE MEANTIME?

UM... SURE I'LL GIVE YOU MY NUMBER.

COOL. COOL THANKS.

LISTEN, UM...

I KNOW YOU DON'T WANT TO COME OUT AGAIN YET, AND I'M NOT TRYING TO PUSH YOU IN TO ANYTHING..

BUT I FEEL LIKE I WOULD BE A JERK TO EVERYONE INVOLVED IF I DIDN'T SAY SARAH'S KEPT MY SECRETS. AND INSTANTLY ACCEPTED ME FOR ALL MY SOMETIMES FUZZINESS.

SHE IS AWESOME AND I LOVE HER

IF YOU EVER DECIDE YOU DO WANT TO TELL HER, I'M SURE IT WOULD GO WELL.

ALSO SHE'S COOL WITH TEDD BEING GENDER FLUID AND HAS BEEN MALE HERSELF MULTIPLE TIMES AND THERE WAS MY BIRTHDAY PARTY AND SHE'S FRIENDS WITH ELLEN WHO WAS CREATED AS A FEMALE DUPLICATE OF ELLIOT AND I BET YOU AND TEDD COULD BE FRIENDS TOO AND SO MANY ENCOURAGING THINGS I COULD SAY IF THEY WEREN'T SECRETS..!

I'LL... KEEP THAT IN MIND.

OKAY I WON'T SAY ANYTHING MORE ABOUT IT

AAAAAA IT WOULD GO SO WELL

YOU'D GIVE
EVERYONE YOUR
SPELL?

YEAH, WHY NOT? NOT EVERYONE WOULD
USE IT, SURE. BUT EVEN BEYOND HELPING
ANYONE WHO'S TRANS. IT'D HELP GIVE
PEOPLE A WIDER PERSPECTIVE OF THINGS

AND MAYBE MAKE
PARTIES MORE
INTERESTING, BUT
MOSTLY THE
ALTRUISTIC STUFF



I'LL LEAVE WHO YOU ARE OUT OF IT
BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GIVE AT
LEAST A COUPLE PEOPLE A GENERAL IDEA
ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED WITH SMOKE



WHO? LIKE... A
MAGIC POLICE?

SORT OF? I PROBABLY
SHOULDN'T ELABORATE.



ARE THEY THE SORT WHO
MIGHT GET MAD IF WORD
SPREAD ABOUT SOMEONE
WHO CAN MAGICALLY
TRANSFORM?

LESS THAN IN
THE PAST, BUT
PROBABLY A
LITTLE, STILL?

I REALLY HOPE I'M NOT THE FIRST PERSON
WHOSE COMING OUT INCLUDES LITERAL MAGIC



SO IN SUMMARY YOU WERE, *SOMEHOW*, ABLE TO TELL THAT SOMEONE, WHO YOU WILL NOT SPECIFY WAS TRANSFORMED

YOU APPROACHED THEM ABOUT THIS DUE TO CONCERNS OF "FAUSTIAN BARGAINS", REVEALED THAT YOU YOURSELF USE MAGIC AND WENT TO TALK SOMEWHERE ABOUT "STUFF" BY THE RIVER WALK

THEN A WIZARD MADE OF SMOKE WANTED TO SEE THEM TRANSFORM. YOU TRANSFORMED INSTEAD TO INTIMIDATE THEM, SCARING THE WIZARD OFF, AND REVEALING YOUR THREE TAILED FORM TO THIS FRIEND OF YOURS.

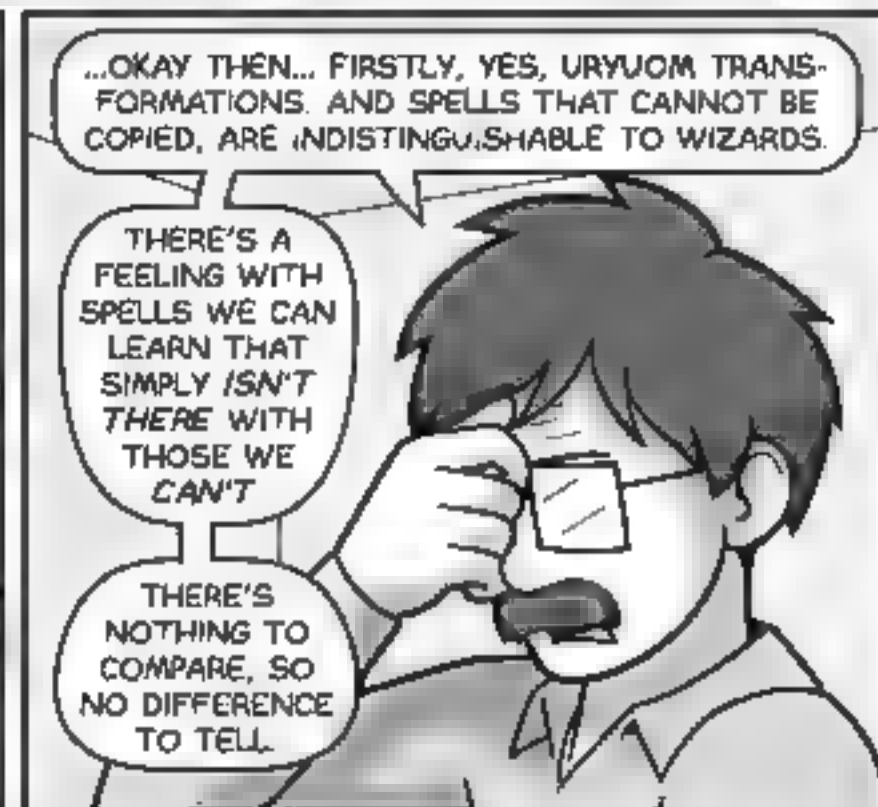


YEP

...OKAY THEN... FIRSTLY, YES, URYUOM TRANSFORMATIONS. AND SPELLS THAT CANNOT BE COPIED, ARE INDISTINGUISHABLE TO WIZARDS.

THERE'S A FEELING WITH SPELLS WE CAN LEARN THAT SIMPLY ISN'T THERE WITH THOSE WE CAN'T

THERE'S NOTHING TO COMPARE, SO NO DIFFERENCE TO TELL

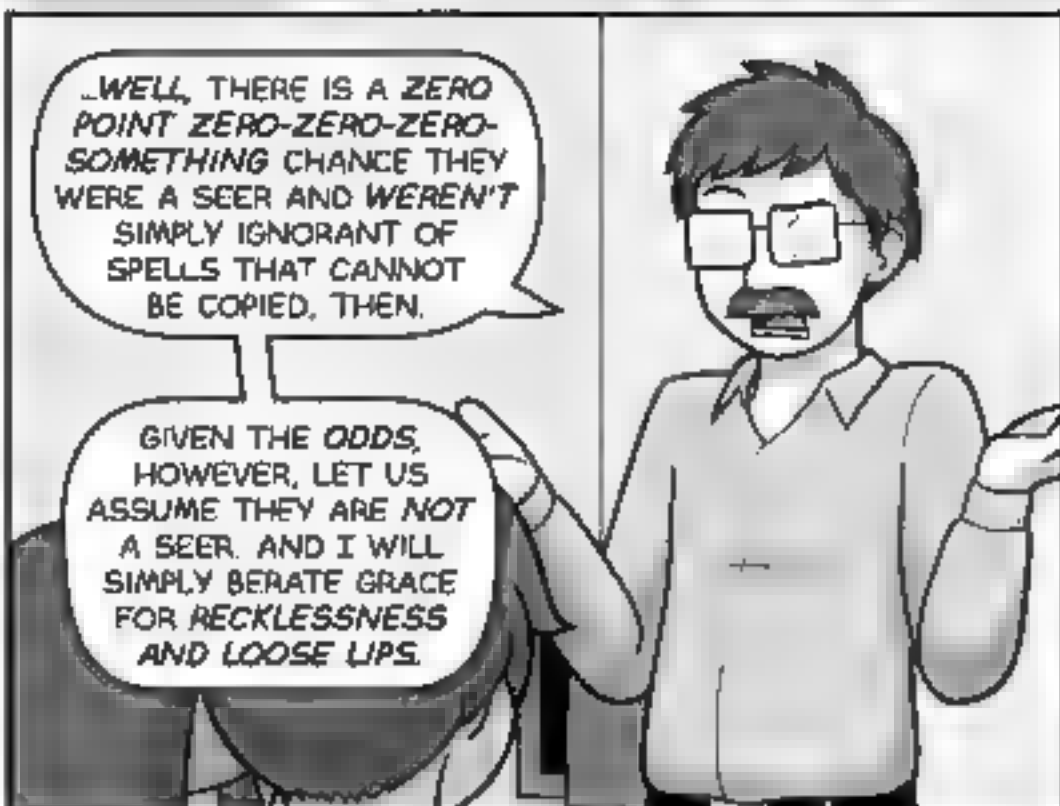


THAT'S NOT HOW IT WORKS FOR ME I'D BE ABLE TO TELL



WELL, THERE IS A ZERO POINT ZERO-ZERO-ZERO-SOMETHING CHANCE THEY WERE A SEER AND WEREN'T SIMPLY IGNORANT OF SPELLS THAT CANNOT BE COPIED, THEN.

GIVEN THE ODDS, HOWEVER, LET US ASSUME THEY ARE NOT A SEER. AND I WILL SIMPLY BERATE GRACE FOR RECKLESSNESS AND LOOSE LIPS.



HEY! I DIDN'T KISS ANYONE!

THAT'S NOT WHAT "LOOSE LIPS" MEANS.





SO I GUESS
I HELPED SAM?

HE HAS SOMEONE TO
TALK TO ABOUT THIS
STUFF NOW AT LEAST
AND I CAN SORTA GET
WHY HE'D RATHER IT
BE ME THAN SARAH.



HE WANTS TO
JUST BE HIMSELF
AND NOT HAVE
TO JUSTIFY WHO
HE IS WITH HER.

I JUST HOPE IF
HE DOES DECIDE
HE WANTS TO DATE
SARAH THAT FEAR
OF TELLING HER
DOESN'T STOP HIM.

AND THAT
THEY'LL GO
ON DOUBLE
DATES WITH
ME AND
TEDD. HE'D
LIKE TEDD



AND... MAYBE IT
WASN'T THE BEST
IDEA, BUT I LIKE
THAT SAM SAW ME
TRANSFORM!

IT FELT GOOD TO
PROTECT SOMEONE
AND IT FELT GOOD
TO TRANSFORM IN
A PUBLIC PLACE!



I HATE HAVING TO
HIDE WHO I AM!



WOW HOW
LONG HAVE I
BEEN REPRESSING
THAT FEELING?

STOP THINKING
SO MUCH, ME
YOU NEED SLEEP



ALTHOUGH. LUKE KNOWS I HAVE
POWER ANYWAY, AND I'M PRETTY SURE
FROM THOSE DREAMS I WAS HAVING
THAT RHODA AND CATALINA HAVE MAGIC
THEY'D PROBABLY LIKE TO TALK ABOUT

The Secret of Sam THE
END



GRRRRR! ME AM AMANDA! THIS IS...

BE...



OKAY, NOPE. NOT DOING THE VOICE

AW...!



I'M SUPPOSED TO BE A BARBARIAN, NOT A CAVE WOMAN! NOT THAT CAVE WOMEN TALKED LIKE THAT

WELL, I AM THE WIZARD LISA, AND WELCOME TO ANOTHER Q&A!



AND WE'RE DRESSED LIKE THIS BECAUSE DAN DID A POLL AND PEOPLE VOTED FOR A "FANTASY" THEME.

WE'RE IN A DUNGEON LEVEL! THERE COULD BE GOBLINS.



AND I, THE SCIENTIST, AM A "BARBARIAN" CLASS, WHILE THE LAWYER GETS TO BE A WIZARD.

HEY, IT'S NOT ALL SUNSHINE AND ROSES FOR ME, EITHER! THE ONLY NON-COMBAT SPELL I HAVE JUST CLEANS STUFF!



WIZARDS GET A SPELL THAT CLEANS THINGS?

UM, YES?

THEN I'M MULTI-CLASSING.

"Grace's face and figure recognition is heightened when her antennae is out. Is this because she's feeling the r faces and bodies w th her psychic antennae?"



NO WHEN GRACE'S ANTENNAE ARE OUT, HER SPATIAL AWARENESS IS HEIGHTENED, SHE CAN VERY ACCURATELY JUDGE DISTANCES AND SIZES, AND YES. HER FACE AND FIGURE RECOGNITION IS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED.

WHILE HER ANTENNAE HAVE TO BE OUT TO GET THESE BOOSTS TO PERCEPTION IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH HER TELEKINESIS, AND DOES NOT INVOLVE "FEELING" THINGS WITH HER ANTENNAE



BUT SHE COULD DO THAT, RIGHT?

WHAT?

SHE CAN FEEL AND "TOUCH" THNGS REMOTELY WITH HER ANTENNAE.



COULD SHE, FOR EXAMPLE, GIVE SHOULDER RUBS FROM ACROSS THE ROOM?

IN... THEORY, PERHAPS. BUT I HAVE TO ASSUME A SHOULDER MASSAGE DONE WITH HANDS WOULD BE BETTER.



WHAT ABOUT WITH PRACTICE?

MAYBE BUT LET'S NOT CONFUSE THE ISSUE. THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF WHETHER GRACE'S HEIGHTENED FACE AND FIGURE AWARENESS INVOLVES TOUCH IS "NO, IT IS PURELY VISUAL"



COULD SHE GIVE TWO PEOPLE SHOULDER RUBS AT THE SAME TIME?

MAYBE WITH PRACTICE, BUT I'M GUESSING IT'S PRUDENT TO MOVE ON TO OTHER QUESTIONS



"What are Tedd's Preferred Gender Pronouns?"



TEDD HAS A PREFERENCE FOR THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HIS CURRENT FORM.

IF TEDD'S CURRENT FORM IS UNKNOWN, HE PREFERS HE / HIM. THIS *MIGHT* BE DUE TO PAST INSTANCES OF BEING MISTAKEN FOR A GIRL.



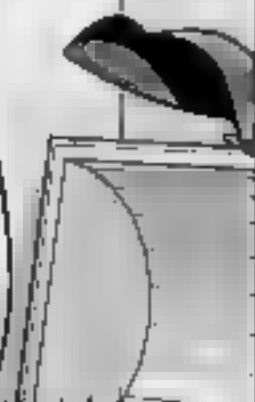
THIS IS ALL VERY SPECIFIC TO TEDD, HOWEVER

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO PREFER *THEY / THEM*, AND TEDD WOULDN'T OBJECT TO THOSE, EITHER.



THEY / THEM ARE VALID SINGULAR PRONOUNS WHEN A GENDER IS UNSPECIFIED, WHICH IS NOTHING NEW

PLENTY OF PEOPLE AREN'T USED TO IT IN THAT CONTEXT, HOWEVER, AND CAN GET HUNG UP ON ITS PLURAL USAGE.



THIS CONFUSION IS UNDERSTANDABLE BUT IF SOMEONE IS REQUESTING PARTICULAR PRONOUNS, IT'S LIKELY IMPORTANT TO THEM.

I THINK THAT'S WORTH KEEPING IN MIND.



BONUS Q AND A, ELLIOT'S PREFERRED PRONOUNS.

IN GENERAL, HE / HIM, BUT IT'S POSSIBLE HE'S RETHINKING WHAT HE WANTS WHEN TRANSFORMED.



"Does size transformation affect people's voices?"



YES. BUT THE TYPE OF TRANSFORMATION AFFECTS HOW "OBEYS THE LAWS OF PHYSICS" IT IS.



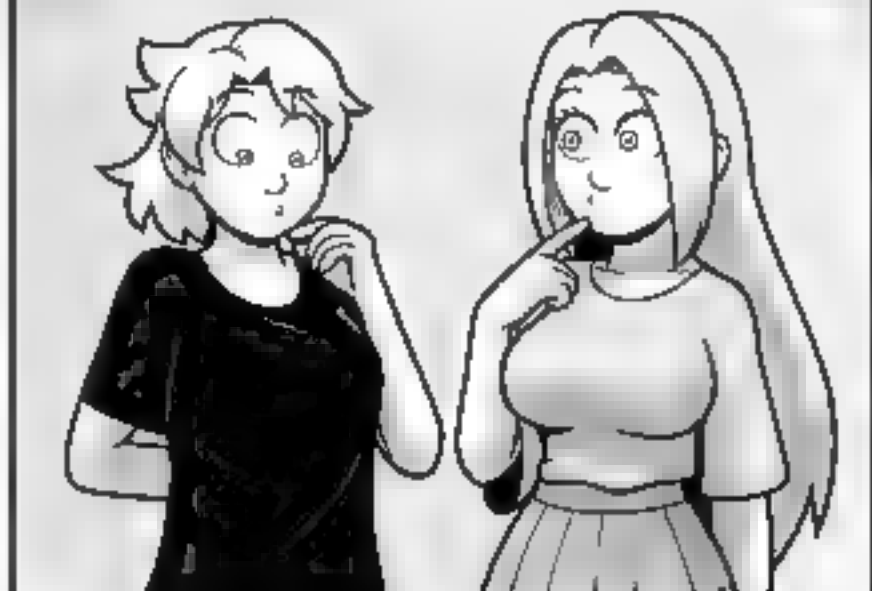
IF A SIMPLE HEIGHT CHANGE, VOICES WILL GET LOWER IF TALLER, OR HIGHER IF SHORTER.



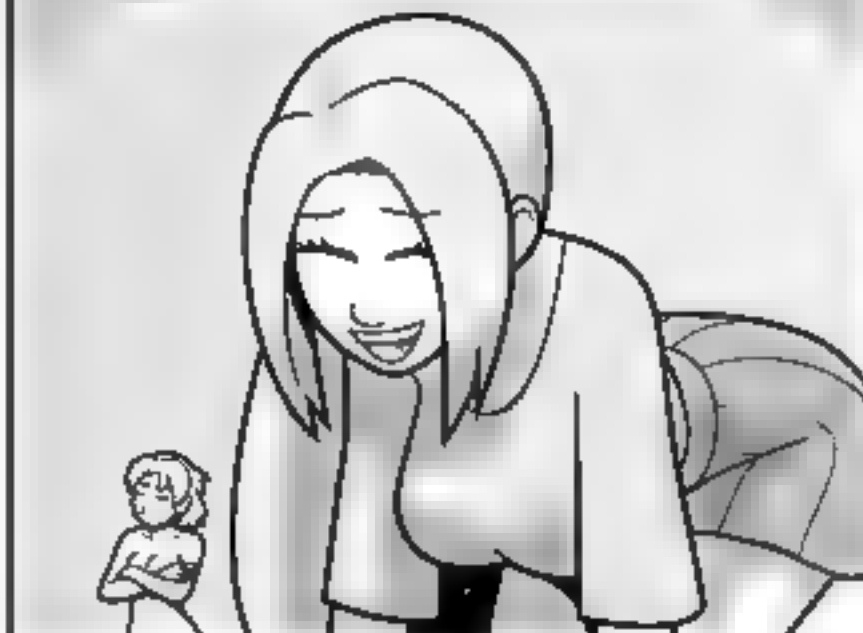
ELLIOT IN HIS STANDARD FEMALE FORM BASICALLY HAS THE SAME VOICE AS HIS "MALL" FORM FROM HIS DATE WITH ASHLEY, BUT THE LATTER IS HIGHER PITCHED.



IF SHRUNK ALL AROUND HOWEVER, THE MAGIC THAT MAKES BEING SHRUNK POSSIBLE WILL MAKE THE CHANGE LESS PRONOUNCED. A SLIGHTLY SHRUNK GIRL ELLIOT WILL STILL SOUND DEEPER THAN "MALL" ELLIOT



IF SHRUNK A LOT, HOWEVER, GIRL ELLIOT WILL HAVE A NOTICEABLY HIGHER VOICE BUT NOT NEARLY AS HIGH (OR INAUDIBLE) AS IT ARGUABLY SHOULD BE.



OF COURSE, SOME SPELLS WILL REMOVE ALL DIFFERENCE IN HOW SOMEONE SOUNDS WHEN GROWN OR SHRUNK. BUT THAT'S MORE DIFFICULT TO DO AND IS NOT THE DEFAULT

WHAT LEVEL WIZARD IS RHODA, AND HOW DO I CHEAT MY WAY TO IT?



"How does Tensaided's rental shop stay in business?"

EXCUSE ME?!

ONE, EVEN IN YOUR UNIVERSE, THERE ARE STILL RENTAL PLACES IN BUSINESS

JUST BECAUSE BLOCK-BUSTER IS MAKING "THIS IS CLEARLY THE PAST" CAMEOS IN MOVIES DOESN'T MEAN ALL THE RENTAL PLACES ARE GONE!

TWO, DIFFERENT UNIVERSE DURING AN UNDEFINED YEAR, AND ONLY ABOUT A YEAR HAS PASSED IN UNIVERSE.

THREE, WE SELL SNACKS WITH GOOD PROFIT MARGINS BY THE REGISTER.

FOUR, WE'RE NEIGHBORS WITH A BUNCH OF FOOD PLACES, SO IT'S CONVENIENT FOR PLENTY OF PEOPLE TO PICK UP AND DROP OFF RENTALS WHILE GETTING THEIR LUNCHES AND DINNERS.

FIVE
SUSAN

I CAN'T POSSIBLY HAVE THAT MUCH IMPACT ON--

SUSAN.

THAT SAID, I'LL LIKELY BECOME A TEACHER OF FILM HISTORY OR SOME THING LATER TO STAY PLOT RELEVANT

PRETEND TO BE SHOCKED WHEN THAT HAPPENS.

"How can we best tell Sarah and Diane apart?"

WHAT?

WHAT?

FIRST AND EASIEST IS SIMPLY THAT SARAH HAS SHOULDER LENGTH HAIR, AND DIANE HAS NOT SHOULDER LENGTH HAIR.

ALSO DIANE'S BROUGHT BACK THE SPIKY BANGS FROM HER CHILDHOOD.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE! SARAH IS ALL ABOUT ROUND SHAPES. WITH A ROUND NOSE, JAW AND MORE JUNK IN THE TRUNK!

HEY!

DIANE, MEANWHILE IS TALLER AND MORE ANGULAR WITH A TRIANGULAR NOSE AND JAW, AND LESS JUNK IN THE TRUNK!

HEY!

AMANDA, WILL YOU PLEASE STOP DIFFERENTIATING PEOPLE BY THE JUNK IN THEIR TRUNK?

HOW ELSE AM I SUPPOSED TO TELL PEOPLE APART?!

YOU JUST... SARAH AND DIANE ARE OUR MAIN HEALER AND ROGUE AND THEY'RE LEAVING.

OH CARP BE RIGHT BACK

"Why didn't Volta re try to have Tedd killed rather than traumatize him?"

HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO KNOW THAT?

IT'S SIMPLE, REALLY

ONE DOES NOT PROVOKE THE WRATH OF EDWARD VERRES LIGHTLY, NOT TO MENTION HIS MONSTER HUNTER EX WIFE.

I'M CONFIDENT ENOUGH TO ATTACK THEIR WHELP INDIRECTLY, CERTAINLY, BUT DIRECTLY? AND TO MURDER THEIR SON?

THEY'D CALL IN EVERY FAVOR THEY HAVE TO SEE ME SUFFER.

FURTHERMORE, I KNEW ARTHUR WOULD ARGUE FOR MAGIC'S CHANGE, AND TEDD WOULD ARGUE AGAINST

I DIDN'T CONSIDER IT LIKELY TEDD WOULD MAKE A COMPELLING ARGUMENT, OR THAT THERE WOULD BE ADDITIONAL SEERS WHO WOULD AGREE WITH TEDD, BUT BOTH WERE POSSIBLE

THESE POTENTIAL UNKNOWN SEERS COULD EVEN BE ARTHUR'S EQUALS.

GIVEN THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES AND X-FACTORS INVOLVED, I ELECTED TO FOCUS ON SABOTAGING TEDD'S POSITION BY SABOTAGING TEDD HIMSELF

LET HIM WEAKEN HIS OWN POSITION AND DULL THE ARGUMENTS OF ANY POTENTIAL UNKNOWN SEERS WHO MIGHT ALLY THEMSELVES WITH HIM.

YOU KNOW YOU COULD'VE JUST TOLD TEDD THE SECOND PURPOSE OF SEERS, RIGHT?

THAT WOULD HAVE MADE HIM INELIGIBLE FOR THE MEETING

IT WOULD HAVE?

I MEAN, THERE WAS STILL THE POTENTIAL FOR ADDITIONAL SEERS VOTING AGAINST THE CHANGE, AND I WANTED SOMEONE UNSTABLE THERE TO WEAKEN THEIR ARGUMENTS.

OBVIOUSLY

"Is (insert several character names here) somewhere in the autism spectrum?"

COMMON CHARACTERS ASKED ABOUT ARE TEDD, SUSAN, GRACE, AND NOAH, THOUGH THEY'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES.

NONE OF US WERE INTENDED TO BE IN THE AUTISM SPECTRUM, BUT THE ANSWER ISN'T AS SIMPLE AS THAT

THIS QUESTION HAS BEEN ASKED MANY TIMES OF MULTIPLE CHARACTERS...

AND NEARLY EVERY TIME IT'S BEEN ASKED, IT'S BEEN AFTER A CHARACTER DID OR SAID SOMETHING DAN WOULD CONSIDER AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

THIS INCLUDES SOCIAL THINGS, AVERSION TO BEING TOUCHED, GENERAL WAYS OF THINKING TALKING, ETC.

AS ONE MIGHT EXPECT, THIS HAS RESULTED IN SOME INTROSPECTION ON DAN'S PART

HE'S BASICALLY REACHED NO CONCLUSION ABOUT HIMSELF BEYOND "IT WOULD EXPLAIN A LOT"

IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO DIAGNOSE AT HIS AGE GIVEN HOW SOME WITHIN THE SPECTRUM CAN ADAPT SOCIALLY OVER TIME

...AND THERE ARE OTHER POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS FOR THE THINGS THAT SUGGEST THIS POSSIBILITY

POINT IS, HE'S NOT QUALIFIED TO MAKE THAT CALL ABOUT HIMSELF, LET ALONE THE REST OF US WE'RE NOT QUALIFIED, EITHER

WE'D HAVE TO DO A LOT MORE RESEARCH AND GET THE OPINIONS OF EXPERTS BEFORE EVEN ATTEMPTING TO INTENTIONALLY WRITE A CHARACTER WITHIN THE AUTISM SPECTRUM.

ALL THAT SAID IT'S ENTIRELY POSSIBLE DAN'S ACCIDENTALLY WRITTEN CHARACTERS WHO COULD BE SO... THE ANSWER'S A SOLID "MAYBE?"

WITH THAT SETTLED, DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPLANATION FOR THE CAT EARS AND SUCH?

NONE WHATSOEVER.

"Speaking of research, how does Dan go about his for EGS?"

HE USES ALL THOSE RESEARCH SKILLS THEY TAUGHT US IN SCHOOL!

EXCEPT THE DEWEY DECIMAL SYSTEM.

AW DANG, LOST MY PLATFORM SHOES.

HE READS UP ON WHAT HE CAN WATCHES WHAT HE CAN..

DAN WATCHED REALITY TV ABOUT HUNTING FERAL HOGS FOR YOU PEOPLE

AND IF HE'S STILL CONFUSED HE RELIES ON HIS ULTIMATE WEAPON

SOCIAL MEDIA!

HELP!

TWEET

TWEET
TWEET

TWEET

UH HUH
UH HUH

REALLY?

I SEE

SO THAT'S HOW IT IS

"What sort of spells can't be copied by wizards?"

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING, EVERY SPELL CAN BE COPIED.

OF COURSE, I SAID "TECHNICALLY", SO IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.



SARAH, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS HER SIMULATED TIME STOP SPELL. FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, THIS SPELL CANNOT BE COPIED. BECAUSE MOST WIZARDS ARE INCAPABLE OF CASTING IT EVEN IF THEY HAVE THE PREREQUISITE POWER LEVELS FOR DOING SO.



BASICALLY, THEY'D HAVE TO BE A WIZARD WHO ALREADY HAD A COMPATIBLE AFFINITY FOR THAT SORT OF MAGIC.

A SEER COULD COPY SARAH'S SPELL, BUT IT WOULD TAKE MULTIPLE VIEWINGS. SOME THINKING IT THROUGH TO MAKE SENSE OF IT ON A TECHNICAL LEVEL...



AND A WOOD STICK WAND WOULDN'T WORK. THEY'D HAVE TO FIND SOMETHING ELSE TO USE.

SPEAKING OF, THE SIZE, SHAPE, MASS, AND MATERIAL OF WANDS CAN MATTER. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING ABLE TO MAKE A WAND OTHERS CAN USE CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS WHAT THE WAND IS.



AS FOR WIZARDS COPYING SPELLS, SOME SPELLS ARE EFFECTIVELY UNIVERSAL AND CAN BE LEARNED BY ANYONE WHILE OTHERS ARE PERSONALIZED AND/OR SPECIAL IN WAYS THAT REQUIRE SOMEONE COMPATIBLE TO USE THEM.



AND WHETHER IT MESSES UP THE PLOT TO GIVE EVERYONE ACCESS TO A GIVEN SPELL.

SHHHH!



"Can magic that teleports away things worn by a person remove piercings and implants?"

SO... WAIT. OPENING THIS CHEST TRIGGERED A DISARMING TRAP, BUT IT PUT ALL MY GEAR IN THIS SAME CHEST?

IT'S LIKE THIS DUNGEON DOESN'T WANT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY

FIRST OFF, THIS QUESTION UPSETS ME

IT MADE ME CONTEMPLATE THINGS BEST LEFT NOT CONTEMPLATED.

WHY IS SHE STILL...?

IF SUCH A SPELL IS SUCCESSFUL (SPELL RESISTANCE EXTENDS TO THINGS WORN), PIERCINGS CAN BE AFFECTED, BUT ONLY IF A SPELL IS DESIGNED TO ACCOUNT FOR IT

WITH PIERCINGS, THE OVERLAP BETWEEN PERSON AND OBJECT CAN PROTECT FROM MAGIC DISARMING, BUT NOT ALWAYS.

AS FOR IMPLANTS. MAGIC SAYS "NOPE" WITH PIERCINGS, IT MIGHT WORK, BUT IF SOMETHING IS INSIDE OF SOMEONE AND COULD BE CONSIDERED A PART OF THEM, THE ANSWER IS NOPE

THIS IS EGGS, GOSH DARN IT

SO SOMEONE COULD CREATE SOMETHING THAT GIVES THEM ALL SORTS OF DANGEROUS MAGICAL POWERS WHEN IMPLANTED AND MAGIC WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT?

UH, WELL, OTHERS WOULDN'T JUST BE ABLE TO TELEPORT IT OUT OF THEM, BUT THERE'D PROBABLY BE OTHER—

SO YOU'RE SAYING I SHOULD DEFINITELY GET AN IRON-MAN STYLE MAGIC CRYSTAL OF POWER EMBEDDED IN MY CHEST?

NO. BAD LISA.

"Why are so many characters LGBT+?
(No issue with it, just wondering)"



ARE THERE
REALLY THAT MANY
CHARACTERS WHO--

THE ENTIRE MAIN
CAST AND A LOT
OF OTHERS.



THE ENTIRE
MAIN CAST?
BUT ELLIOT

PREFERS BEING A GIRL
SOMETIMES, ADMITTED AN
ATTRACTION TO NOAH.



BUT
SUSAN...

ISN'T COMFORTABLE DOING
MUCH OF ANYTHING WITH ANYONE
BUT FINDS CATALINA ATTRACTIVE
AND PROBABLY NANASE



YEAH, BUT SARAH...



OH.

NOT THAT ANY OF THIS
ANSWERS THE QUESTION.



AS FOR ACTUALLY ANSWERING THE QUESTION OF WHY THERE ARE SO MANY LGBT+ CHARACTERS, I HAVE RECEIVED A DETAILED LETTER FROM DAN WITH THE ANSWER:



"GENDER FLUIDITY AND BISEXUALITY FEELS NORMAL AND LIKE THE DEFAULT TO ME"

"ALSO, I GREW UP IN THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES WANTING TO SEE MORE LGBT+ CHARACTERS."



"ALSO ALSO, WITH ALL THE SEX CHANGE TRANSFORMATION IN THIS COMIC, IT FELT LIKE THERE SHOULD BE TRANSGENDER CHARACTERS GETTING IN ON THAT"

P.S., A SINISTER POLITICAL AGENDA TO MAKE EVERYONE SUPER GAY?!



UH. NO. BUT THERE IS A P S

"I DON'T KNOW IF SUSAN IS ASEXUAL. AKA ACE. SHE COULD BE, BUT HER SEXUALITY IS SOMEWHAT AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL."

"I FEEL DEFINING HER WOULD BE LIKE DEFINING MY OWN, WHICH MAKES PUTTING A LABEL ON IT AWKWARD FOR ME."



I GUESS THAT COULD BE SORT OF AWKWARD.

IT COULD BE, YES.



FOR THE RECORD THOUGH, I AM SUPER GAY IT'S WHY I WEAR A CAPE

YES, YES, WE KNOW



"It's been established via the EGSNP storylines *Marker* and *Escape From The Mall* that name-based affinities, in which people can have affinities based on strange names, are a thing. Could you intentionally change your name in the hope of getting specific spells?"

DO YOU WANT TO BE A CATGIRL?

(ALSO, I'M KITTY)

IF YOU'RE ASKING ABOUT GETTING A NAME-BASED AFFINITY BY CHANGING YOUR NAME, THE ANSWER IS USUALLY NO. THERE'S SOME WEIRD MAGICAL NONSENSE THAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE IS FIRST NAMED THAT SETS OFF MAGIC'S FUTURE IRONY SENSORS.

NOTE THAT THIS DOES MEAN A PARENT COULD INTENTIONALLY NAME A CHILD IN THE HOPE OF GIVING THEM AN AFFINITY

THIS MOST COMMONLY HAPPENS WHEN THE FIRST AND LAST NAME ARE REALLY ON THE NOSE THE OBVIOUS EXAMPLE BEING "CATALINA BOBCAT" GIRL HAS ALL SORTS OF CAT MAGIC AFFINITY

IF CATALINA WERE TO CHANGE HER NAME TO "REX MCDOGBITE" LATER, SHE WOULD NOT GAIN AN AFFINITY FOR DOG SPELLS.

IF, HOWEVER, YOU'RE ASKING IF IT MIGHT HELP AN AWAKENED MAGIC USER GET SPECIFIC SPELLS, THE ANSWER IS YES.

IF SOMEONE WANTS A SPELL SO BADLY THAT THEY CHANGE THEIR NAME, IT CAN IMPACT WHAT SPELLS THEY GET NEXT

THAT IS, HOWEVER, DIFFERENT FROM HAVING "AFFINITY" FOR A SPELL. NAMING ONE'S SELF "TIMEY STOPS M" WOULD NOT SUDDENLY MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO GET SARAH'S SPELL, WHICH REQUIRES A NATURAL AFFINITY FOR IT

WHAT IF A PARENT NAMED THEIR KID "TIMEY STOPSIM"?

I DON'T MAYBE?

SOMEONE TRY NAMING THEIR KID THAT

ANOTHER FACTOR IN NAME-BASED AFFINITY IS, IF A PERSON DOESN'T ACCEPT THEIR NAME IT WILL BE IRRELEVANT TO THEM.

THUS EXPLAINING MY LACK OF CHEER-LEADER SPELLS.

NAH, NOT WITH "TIFFANY"* YOU'D NEED A NAME LIKE "BOUNCY POMPOMS"

* "Susan" is technically her middle name

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE SORT OF FULL NAMES YOU SEE IN STORIES THAT ARE ABSURDLY ON THE NOSE AND/OR FULL OF PUNS. NAME-BASED AFFINITIES IN GENERAL ARE RARE

IT'S A JOKE ABOUT REALLY PROPHETIC NAMES IN FICTION THAT PREDICT THEIR FUTURE. LIKE SOMEONE NAMED "ROB N SOARHIGH" CONVENIENTLY WINDING UP WITH BIRD POWERS.

THAT'S WHY "WHEN FIRST NAMED" WAS SPECIFIED.

SO WAIT IF I CHANGE MY LAST NAME FIRST, AND THEN CHANGE MY FIRST NAME I CAN MANUFACTURE A NAME-BASED AFFINITY?

UM... MAYBE? BUT THE "DEEP PERSONAL REASONS" FOR THE FIRST NAME ARE KEY, SO I DON'T THINK JUST DOING IT FOR AN AFFINITY WORKS.

WHICH IS WORTH NOTING. WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT MOST NAMES. HERE, "CATALINA SMITH" WOULDN'T RESULT IN A NAME-BASED AFFINITY

(SHE COULD STILL GET CAT SPELLS, BUT IT WOULDN'T BE A NAME-BASED AFFINITY)

THERE IS AN EXCEPTION TO NAME CHANGING. HOWEVER, IF THE CHANGE OF A FIRST NAME IS DONE FOR DEEPLY PERSONAL REASONS, AND IF IT CREATES A PUN WITH THEIR EXISTING LAST NAME, IT CAN RESULT IN A NAME-BASED AFFINITY

ODDS ARE LOW, BECAUSE THEIR FIRST NAME WOULD HAVE TO BE DEEPLY PERSONAL WHILE ALSO FORMING A PUN WITH THEIR LAST NAME, BUT IT COULD HAPPEN.

AND IF ON A DEEP PERSONAL LEVEL I WANT TO BE ABLE TO SUMMON CUPCAKES?

I DON'T KNOW BUT I WOULDN'T RECOMMEND IT

For our final question, "what are Grace's antennae made out of? Are they just hair?"



THEY'RE NOT JUST HAIR! THERE IS AN ANTENNAE-EE CORE SURROUNDED BY HAIR-LIKE FUR.

"AN ANTENNAE-EE CORE"? THE HECK DOES THAT MEAN?



YOU KNOW LIKE AN URYUOM ANTENNA, BUT WITH FUR, AND NO BALL-DEALIE.

YOU DON'T SOUND LIKE AN EXPERT ON THIS.



I'M NOT! URYUOMS ARE MORE CLASSIFIED THAN MAGIC! ALL I'M SORT OF SURE OF IS THAT THEIR ANTENNAE DON'T HAVE BONES! UNLESS THEY DO

MAYBE WE SHOULD SHAVE GRACE'S ANTENNAE?



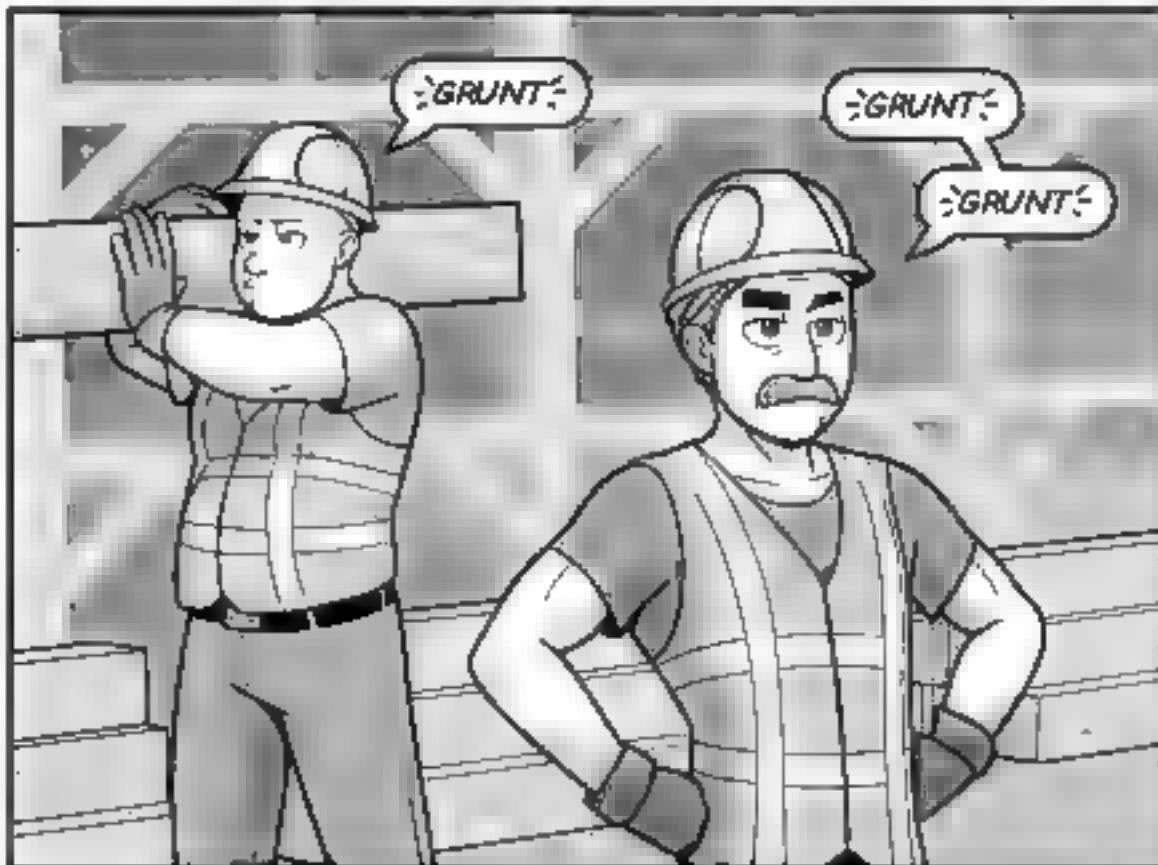
WHAT WAS THAT?

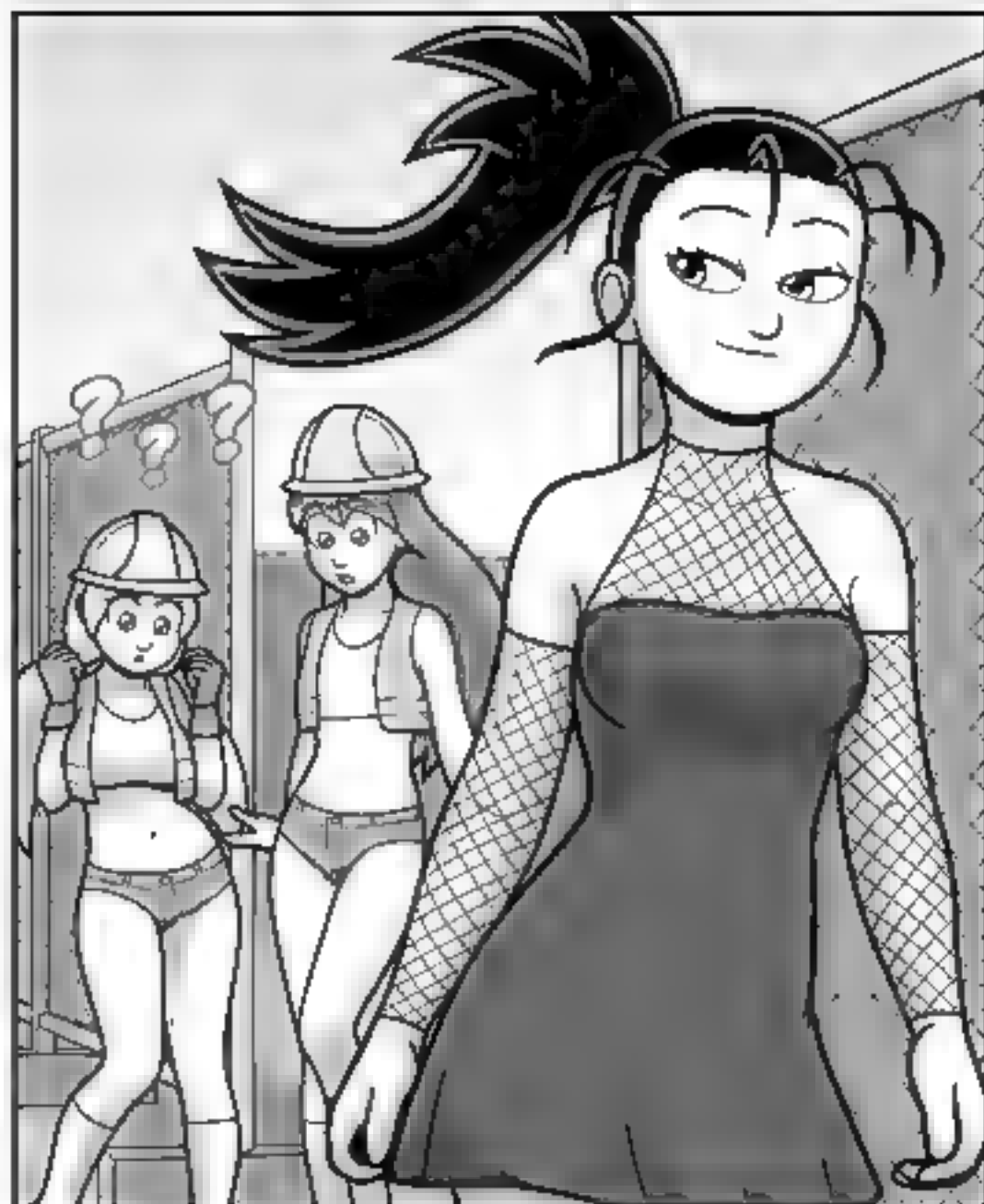


WE WERE JUST SAYING THANKS FOR READING! UNTIL NEXT TIME!

AND GRACE IS LOVELY AND WE WOULD NEVER DO ANYTHING WEIRD TO HER.





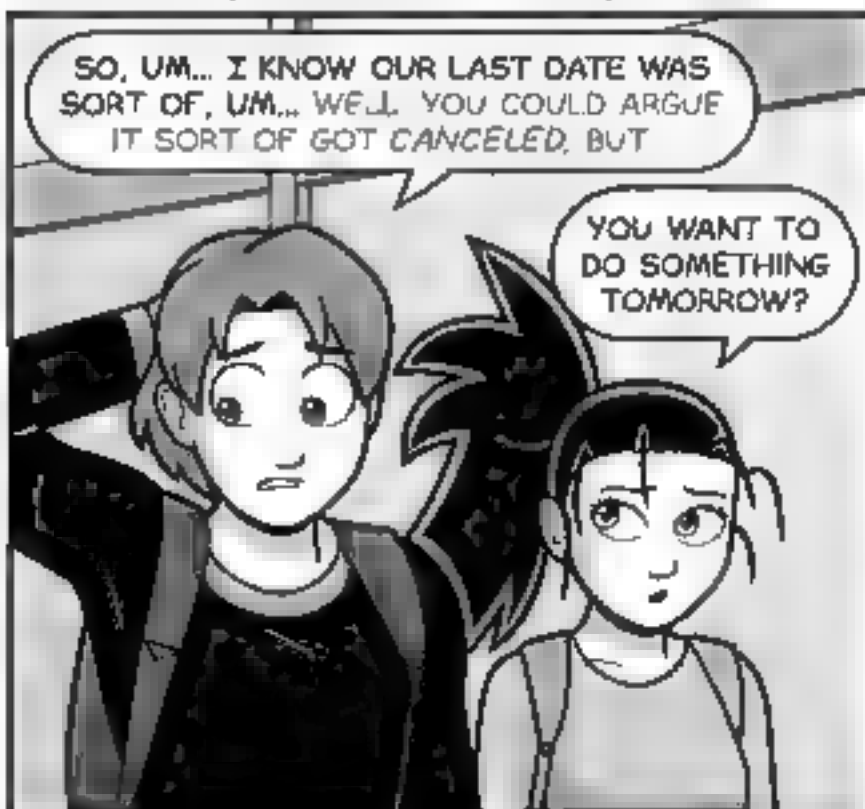


The sorceress walked away with a
th the lovely legs she had given

The two construction workers, baff
oked at each other. They were ea
ing good looking, but they found
ared interest in architects.



The Thursday after Elliot and Ashley's last "date".



SO, UM... I KNOW OUR LAST DATE WAS SORT OF, UM... WELL, YOU COULD ARGUE IT SORT OF GOT CANCELED, BUT

YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING TOMORROW?



YES. THAT I MEAN, IF YOU WANT TO. WELL, OF COURSE IF YOU WANT TO, THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING, BUT, AH.

SURE. YES. OKAY



GOOD! GREAT! UM...

YOU... WANT TO TRY WATCHING A MOVIE AT MY PLACE AGAIN..?



ASHLEY?

UH NO, I... I'D RATHER GO SEE A NEW MOVIE! IN A THEATER!



OH. OKAY. SURE.

NOT THAT I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK TO YOUR HOUSE! I'VE JUST REALLY WANTED TO SEE UM... UHHH...



WE'LL FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU'VE REALLY BEEN WANTING TO SEE LATER

OKAY

The Saturday after the r date (which was, shockingly, uneventful)



Monday morning, MNHS (omg time is flying you guys)





IS THIS ABOUT THE VAMPIRES AT THE MALL?

SHE HASN'T SEEMED UPSET.

NO, BUT... I HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING FOR PRIVACY'S SAKE, BUT WHEN I TALKED TO HER THE DAY AFTER, SHE SAID SOMETHING LIKE SHE WAS "NUMB" FROM HAVING TOO MANY FEELINGS TO SETTLE ON ONE.

SHE'S FEELING MORE THAN SHE'S LETTING ON, AND, WELL...

...A PARTY WITH EVERYONE TALKING ABOUT MAGIC MIGHT BRING THAT UP AND THE WHOLE "HOW DID YOU GET MAGIC" QUESTION.

OH, OH. DAMMIT HER STORY IS A VAMPIRE ATTACKED HER AND IMMORTALS APPROACHED HER RIGHT? AND THAT'S ALSO HOW NANASE.

DAMMIT OF COURSE SHE DOESN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT HER MAGIC RIGHT NOW.

WOULDN'T IT BE GOOD FOR SUSAN TO TALK ABOUT IT, THOUGH?

MAYBE, BUT WE SHOULDN'T PRESSURE HER ESPECIALLY NOT AT A PARTY.

I WAS THINKING BEFORE THE PARTY, BUT I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.

IS THE PARTY A BAD IDEA? I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR EVERYONE, BUT...

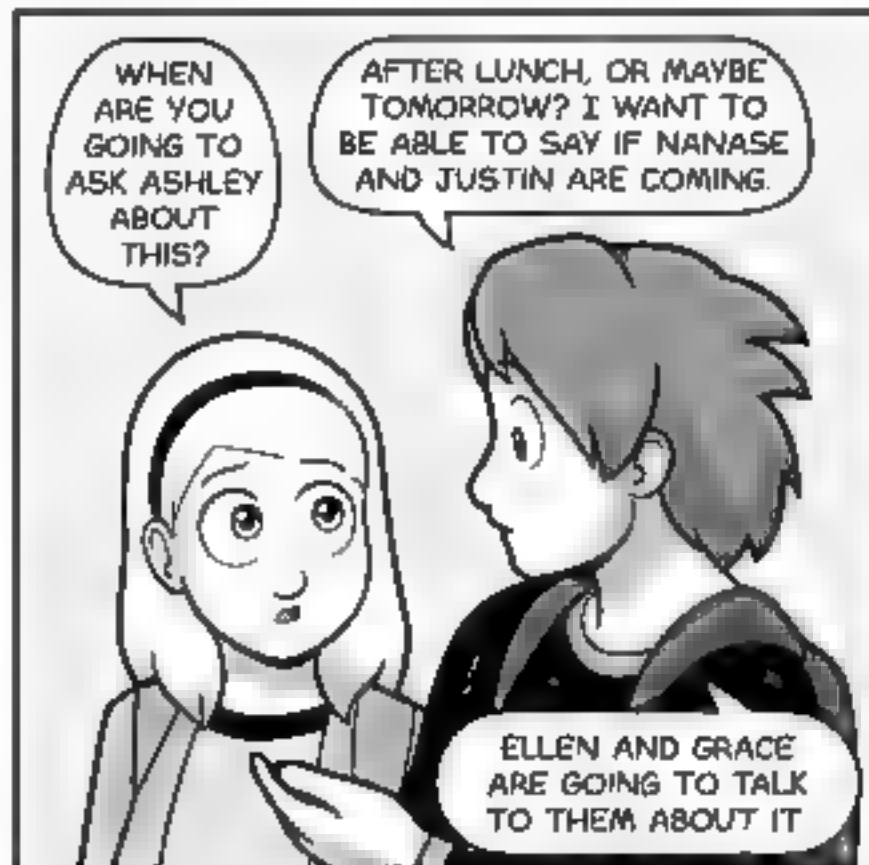
I THINK IT'S A GREAT IDEA. JUST DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY IF ANYONE DOESN'T FEEL UP FOR IT. OKAY?

INCLUDING ASHLEY SHE MIGHT NEED TIME, TOO.

ARE YOU SUGGESTING I DON'T PREPARE AN ASSORTMENT OF TRANSFORMATION PARTY GAMES?

THAT MIGHT BE A BIT MUCH FOR ASHLEY?

I'M STILL GOING TO BRAINSTORM.



Meanwhile, over at Moperville South High School...

SO IT'S NOT *JUST* A PARTY FOR ASHLEY TO GET TO KNOW PEOPLE WITH MAGIC, BUT IT IS THAT

YEAH!

AND I KNOW YOU THINK ASHLEY IS THE DEVIL BECAUSE SHE'S UNUSUALLY "GOOD", NANASE, BUT PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT SHE AND I ARE DRAGON SISTERS NOW

ELLEN WHAT DOES THAT EVEN

DRAGON SISTERS

HM... A CASUAL PARTY IN WHICH WE'RE ENCOURAGED TO CASUALLY PLAY AROUND WITH MAGIC, AND I DON'T HAVE TO BE A GIRL?

I'M IN.

THOUGH I *COULD* BE A GIRL... BUT THERE'S NO REAL POINT WITHOUT A BUNCH OF STRAIGHT MALE ONLOOKERS.

OH! BUT I COULD ANSWER THE DOOR WHEN THE PIZZA'S DELIVERED!

I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T LIKE BEING A GIRL, JUSTIN.

I HAVE A VERY LIMITED AND SPECIFIC INTEREST IN IT



SO WHY ARE YOU AND ASHLEY "DRAGON SISTERS"?

BECAUSE THAT THING IN THE DEWITCHERY DIAMOND THAT MADE MY HAIR GREEN, AND ASHLEY A WIZARD, WAS OBVIOUSLY A DRAGON SCALE?

WAIT WHAT?



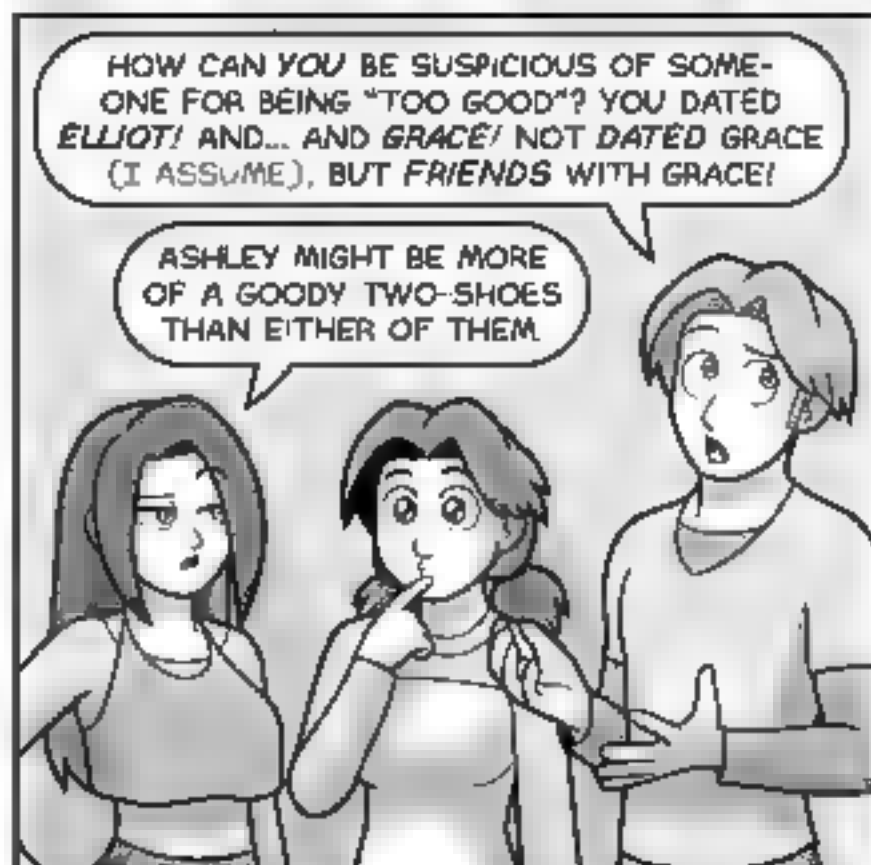
ANYWAY, NANASE! YOU'LL GO TO THE PARTY?

OF COURSE I'LL GO.

DRAGONS ARE REAL?

I REQUIRE MORE INFORMATION.

IT SHOULD BE FUN, AND MAYBE I'LL EVEN GET OVER MY KNEE-JERK SUSPICION OF ASHLEY.



HOW CAN YOU BE SUSPICIOUS OF SOMEONE FOR BEING "TOO GOOD"? YOU DATED ELLIOT! AND... AND GRACE! NOT DATED GRACE (I ASSUME), BUT FRIENDS WITH GRACE!

ASHLEY MIGHT BE MORE OF A GOODY TWO-SHOES THAN EITHER OF THEM.



WHAT?! THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE

GRACE STAND UP FOR YOUR GOODY TWO-SHOES TITLE



HUH? WHAT? SORRY?

I AM AWAITING YOUR RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION IN RESPONSE TO NANASE SAYING ASHLEY IS MORE OF A GOODY TWO-SHOES THAN YOU



Presently nervous and conflicted as heck because this takes place hours before she had intended to get Sam's phone number from the comic shop *

* See The Secret Of Sam



YEAH, SHE PROBABLY IS...

WHAT



Later, towards the end of the school day...





OTHER MAGIC
USERS?



YEAH, LIKE NANASE, ELLEN
AND TEDD. EVERYONE WHO'S
GOING CAN USE MAGIC.

THEY'RE NICE
AND COOL AND
GOOD LISTENERS
AND I THINK
YOU'D LIKE
THEM.



SO THE PARTY'S
AT TEDD'S HOUSE,
BUT IT WAS YOUR
IDEA TO HAVE IT
FOR ME?



YOU INSPIRED THE PARTY, BUT IT'S
TEDD'S PARTY FOR HIS FRIENDS TO HANG
OUT AND HAVE FUN AND YOU'RE JUST
BEING INVITED LIKE ANYONE ELSE

YOU DON'T WANT TO SAY IT'S FOR
ME SO I DON'T FEEL PRESSURED.



IT'S FACTUALLY
ACCURATE THAT
TEDD IS HAVING
THE PARTY
EITHER WAY AT
THIS POINT.

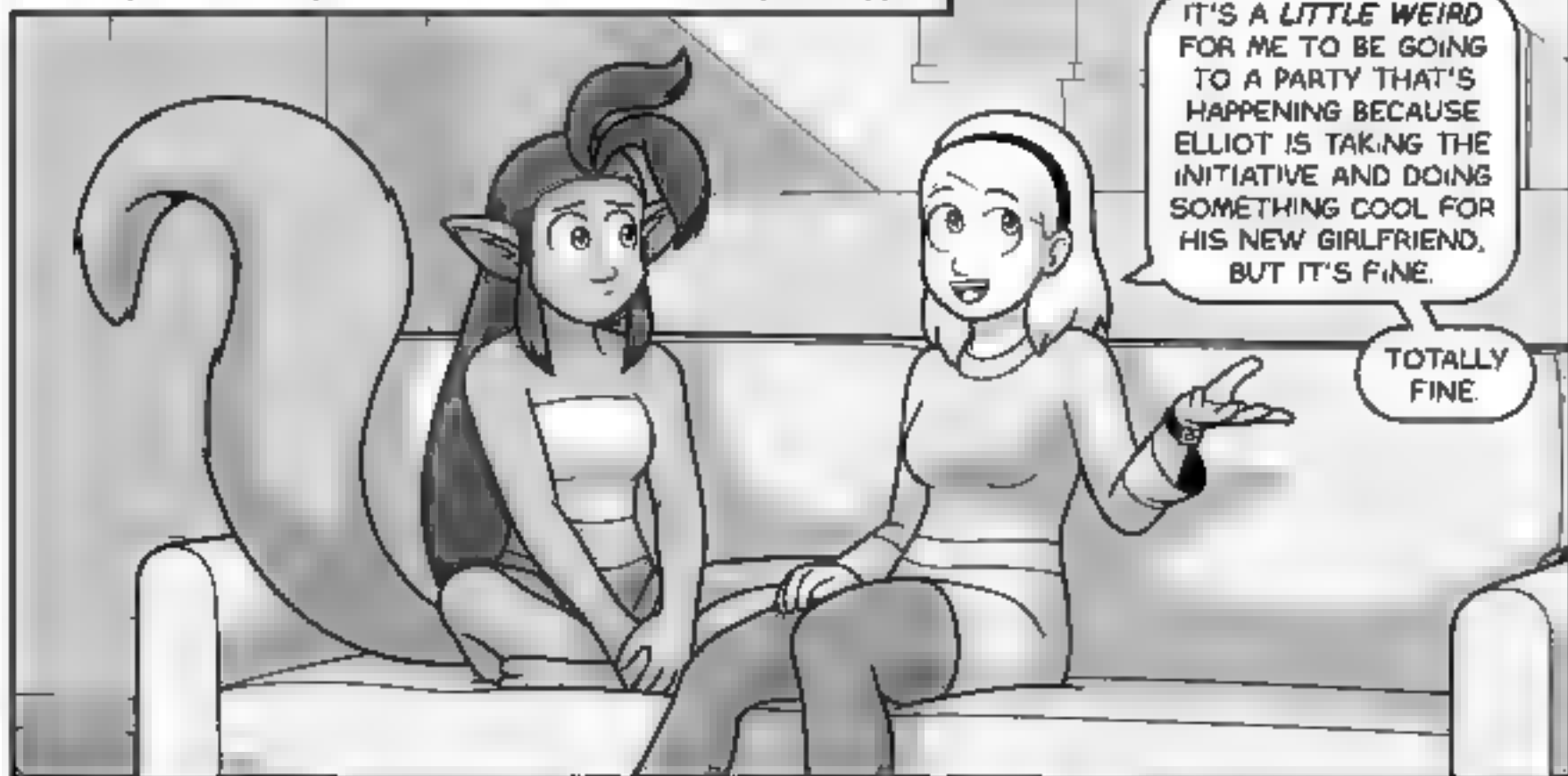
..AND IT'S
TOTALLY OKAY
IF YOU DON'T
WANT TO--



Kiss



I'D LOVE
TO GO.





HEY, SARAH.

HEY TEDD.

YOU TELL HER ABOUT THE SMOKE WIZARD YET, GRACE?



UH...

SMOKE WIZARD?



I WOULD'VE TALKED ABOUT IT AT SCHOOL, BUT FOR ALL WE KNOW, THEY'RE A CLASSMATE

THAT, AND IT'S GRACE'S STORY



WHAT HAPPENED? ARE YOU OKAY?

I'M FINE! I UH..



I WAS AT THE COMIC SHOP AND I COULD TELL SOMEONE I KNOW WAS TRANSFORMED

INTO SMOKE?



NO NO, THEY WEREN'T THE WIZARD. IT WAS A *SUBTLE* CHANGE

EASY FOR MOST PEOPLE TO MISS, BUT I COULD TELL.



ANYWAY I WAS WORRIED THEY MIGHT HAVE MADE A DEAL WITH AN *IMMORTAL* JERK FOR A MAGIC MARK, SO I ASKED THEM ABOUT IT



YOU JUST ASKED SOMEONE IF THEY MADE A DEAL WITH AN IMMORTAL FOR TRANSFORMATION MAGIC?



YEAH. ANYWAY, THEY DIDN'T, BUT THEY DID HAVE A MAGIC MARK AND WE GOT TO TALKING ABOUT STUFF



AND AFTER WE WENT SOMEWHERE RELATIVELY PRIVATE, A WIZARD MADE OF SMOKE OVERHEARD THEM MENTION TRANSFORMATION, AND WANTED TO SEE THEM DO IT

HOW DOES BEING SMOKE EVEN...?



NO IDEA. SO I CHANGED INTO MY THREE TAILED FORM TO INTIMIDATE THEM...

BUT THEIR REACTION WAS TOTALLY LIKE "I AM A WIZARD WHO WANTED A NEW SPELL", AND THEY SMOKED OFF



OKAY... SO... SOME ACQUAINTANCE OF YOURS KNOWS YOU CAN TRANSFORM, AND A WIZARD WHO TURNS INTO SMOKE DOES, TOO?

YEP, BUT WIZARDS CAN'T COPY MY CHANGES. SO THAT'S GOOD.

AND YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE WIZARD BECAUSE THEY WERE SMOKE?



YEP WELL, I'M PRETTY SURE THEY WERE HOPING FOR A NEW SPELL AND LIKE TRANSFORMATION, BUT THAT'S ABOUT IT

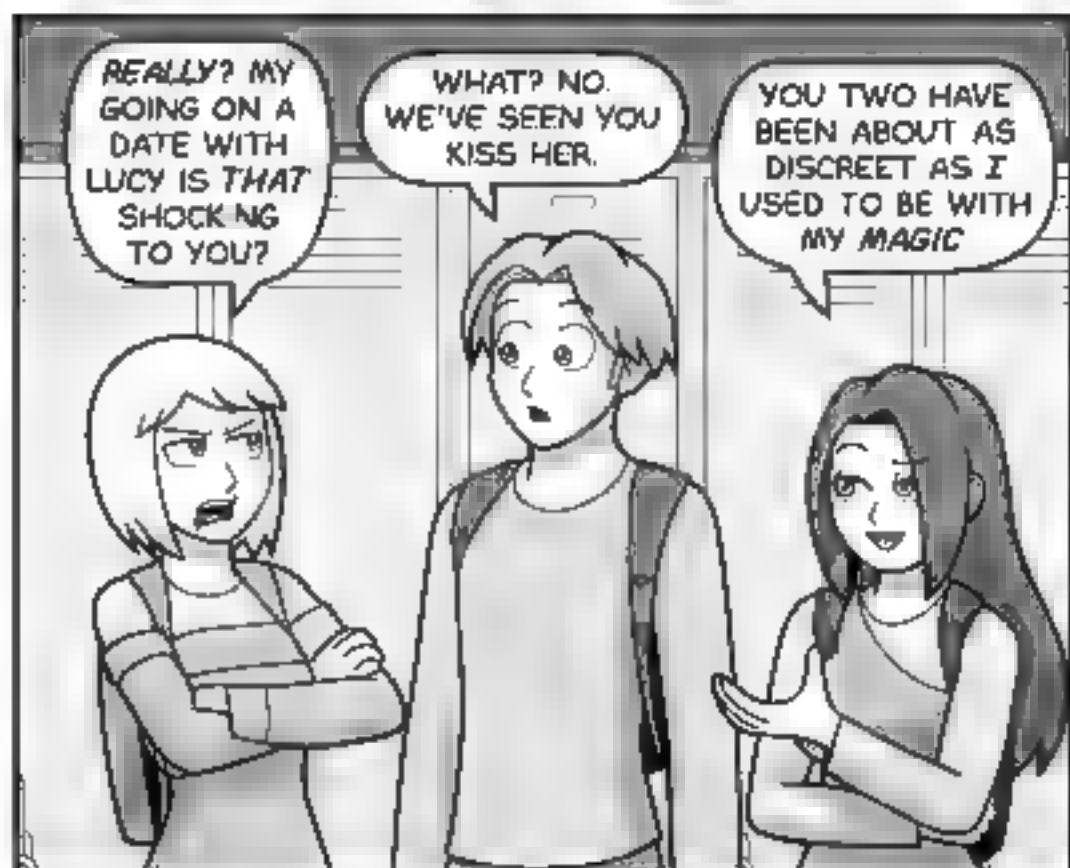
AND YOU'RE NOT SAYING WHO THE OTHER PERSON WAS, OR YOU'D HAVE SAID THEIR NAME ALREADY



I'M NOT

I SUPER WANT TO, I HATE KEEPING SECRETS, BUT I'M NOT





ALL LUKE AND I'VE REALLY DECIDED ON IS THAT WE'RE HAVING OUR FIRST *REAL* DATE ON FRIDAY...

BUT WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO.

I KEEP BLANKING ON ANYTHING THAT'S NOT "DINNER AND A MOVIE", WHICH...

I MEAN, THAT'S NOT *BAD*, BUT...

BOWLING.

UM, EXCUSE ME, DIANE, BUT THIS IS A *PRIVATE* CONVERSATION?

ALSO, TELL ME MORE

IT'S FUN, THEY HAVE FOOD, YOU CAN PLAY IT AT YOUR OWN PACE WHILE TALKING, AND THE CLOSEST ALLEY HAS AN ARCADE, SO EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO WAIT (AND ON A FRIDAY NIGHT, YOU *WILL*)...

THERE ARE PLENTY OF CONVERSATION STARTERS TO EASE TENSION AND HELP YOU GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER.

IT'S ALSO A GOOD WAY TO GAUGE HOW COMPETITIVE AND CONSIDERATE THEY ARE. YOU CAN LEARN A LOT FROM HOW SOMEONE PLAYS A GAME.

JUST DON'T FORGET TO WEAR SOCKS, AND DON'T BRING YOUR OWN BOWLING BALL UNLESS YOU WANT TO SPEND THE WHOLE TIME WAITING FOR YOUR LANE SITTING AROUND WITH IT!

ALSO, GIVE LUCY AND ME SPACE IF YOU SEE US THERE

THAT'S WHERE WE'RE GOING FOR OUR FIRST DATE, TOO.

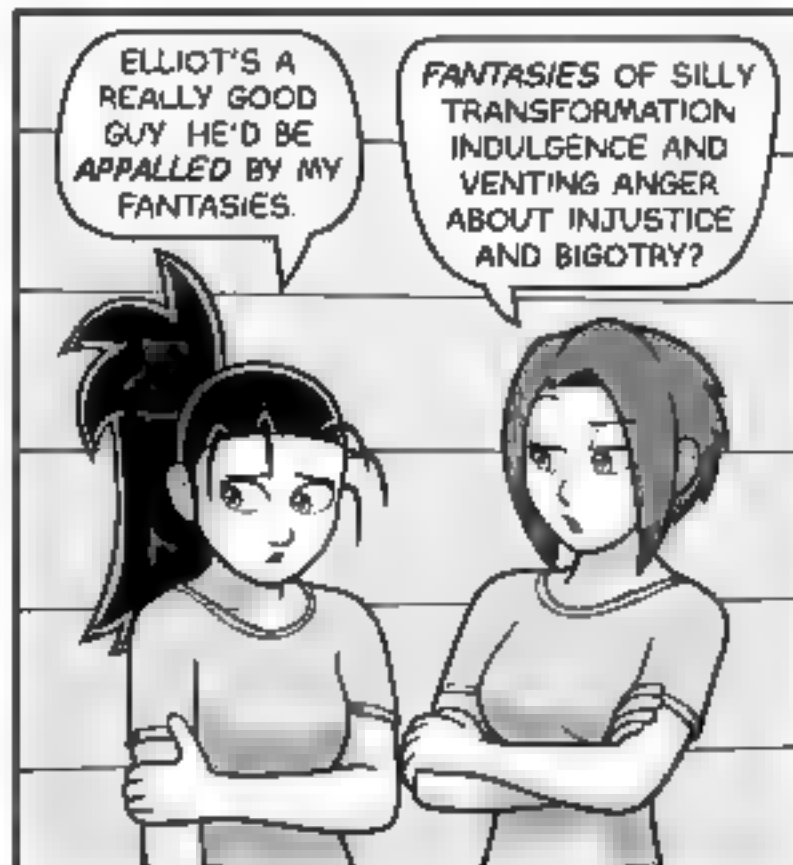


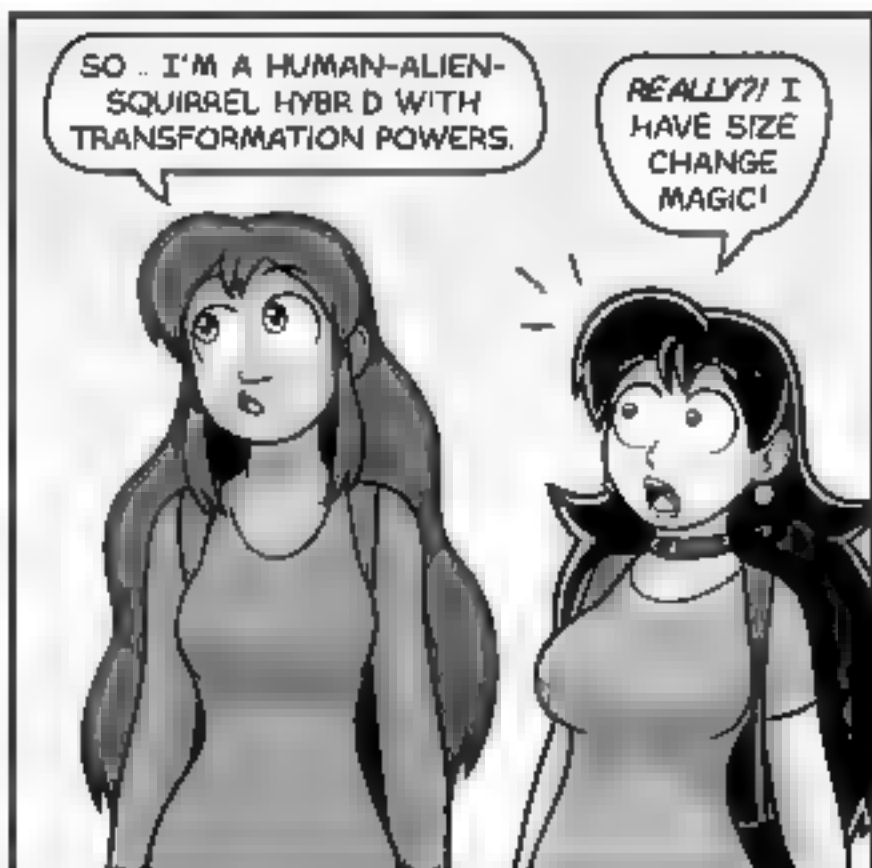


WHY AM I SO GOOD AT THINKING UP DISPROPORTIONATE MAGIC REVENGE?!

MAYBE I SHOULD FOCUS ON FANTASIES ABOUT PEOPLE USING MAGIC ON ME. AT LEAST THEN--







WHAT? I
CAN'T DO
MAGIC.

YOU WERE SERIOUSLY SO
CONFIDENT THAT EVERY PART
OF THOSE DREAMS WERE
ACCURATE THAT YOU SPILLED
YOUR BIGGEST SECRET?

OR...

NOW THAT I'VE
CONFIRMED YOU AND
CATALINA HAVE MAGIC,
I'D BETTER TELL MY
NOT-YET-FATHER-IN-
LAW ALL ABOUT IT

HE'LL FIND OUT
ANYWAY IF I START
INVITING YOU OVER.
THE GOVERNMENT IS
GOING TO HAVE SUCH
A FILE ON YOU!

PAT
PAT

GRACE, WHAT THE HELL?!
YOU REVEALING YOUR SECRETS
COULD WIND UP REVEALING MY
SECRETS. AND THE SECRETS
OF ALL OUR FRIENDS!

WE NEVER
AGREED TO
THAT!

'TIS I, ARTHUR!
KEEPING TABS ON
TEDD'S ASSOCIATES!

IF YOU, TEDD'S ONE
TRUE LOVE, CANNOT
BE TRUSTED TO KEEP
SECRETS LIKE THIS,
THEN PERHAPS HE
CAN'T BE TRUSTED
WITH A LAB!

YOU'RE...
YOU'RE NOT
HUMAN?

I'M HUMAN!
I'M JUST ALSO
OTHER THINGS!

GET AWAY
FROM ME,
FREAK!

A LOT OF
PEOPLE SEEM
GREAT UNTIL THE
WRONG SUBJECT
COMES UP



WAIT,
NO! I'M A
FRIEND!



GET THE MONSTER!

FRIIIIIEND!



EVERYTHING I'VE EXPERIENCED WITH
FRIENDS WHO DO KNOW ABOUT ME
SAYS MY FRIENDS WHO DON'T KNOW
YET WOULD BE OKAY WITH ME NOT
BEING ONE HUNDRED PERCENT HUMAN.



EVERYTHING
THIS TELLS ME
SAYS I'VE BEEN
LUCKY SO FAR.

GRACE? YOU OKAY?



RHODA! I-I'M
FINE! PRE-TEST
JITTERS!

DON'T WORRY
I'M SURE YOU'LL
DO GREAT



HUG

...YOU'RE
WELCOME?

MEANWHILE, in a metaphorical corner of Susan's mind .



SARAH, YOU KNOW SUSAN BETTER THAN ANYONE. CAN YOU THINK OF ANYTHING WE COULD SAY TO HER?

BEYOND THAT WE'D LOVE TO SEE HER AT THE PARTY? NOT REALLY

I HATE SAYING IT, BUT A SMALL PART OF ME WOULD BE SORT OF GLAD IF SHE DIDN'T COME.

GASP

I KNOW, I KNOW! BELIEVE ME, I WANT HER TO COME! IT'S JUST

WE'RE GOING TO BE ABLE TO SHOW OFF MAGIC STUFF AT THIS PARTY RIGHT? LIKE FURRY FORMS, GENDER CHANGE, BODY MORPHS, ALL THAT JAZZ?

I GUESS. WE DON'T WANT TO OVERDO IT AND SPOOK ASHLEY BUT WE COULD SHOW OFF A LITTLE

RIGHT YEAH IT'S JUST... I'M NOT SURE I'D BE AS COMFORTABLE DOING THAT WITH SUSAN THERE.

AH, THE TRICK *THERE* IS TO EMBRACE DEFIANCE OF SOCIETAL PRESSURE TO CONFORM!

I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT SOCIETY I'M WORRIED ABOUT SUSAN'S LOOK OF DISAPPROVAL WHEN I SHOW OFF A CURVY FOX FORM.

OH, I MEAN, I DOUBT SHE'D SAY ANYTHING...

BUT *THE LOOK*... I HAVEN'T EXACTLY TOLD SUSAN HOW MUCH I'VE TAKEN TO TRANSFORMATION FOR FUN..

I'M SURE SHE'D BE OKAY WITH IT BESIDES, THE ONLY WAY YOU'RE GOING TO GET INOCULATED TO THAT LOOK IS BY GETTING USED TO IT

YOU WOULD KNOW WOULDN'T YOU.

MOST DEFINITELY







WHAT?
NO.

I'M
NOT...

NO



I KNOW
"THAT MYSTERY
ASIAN GIRL
WHO HELPED
CHEERLEADRA"
WAS ASHLEY

AND
POSER ELF
JESUS
SAID YOUR
NAME



I DON'T KNOW WHY THAT
GUY SAID MY NAME, AND
MAYBE THAT WAS ASHLEY

BUT I HAD TO LEAVE
OUR FIRST DATE EARLY
BECAUSE REASONS, AND

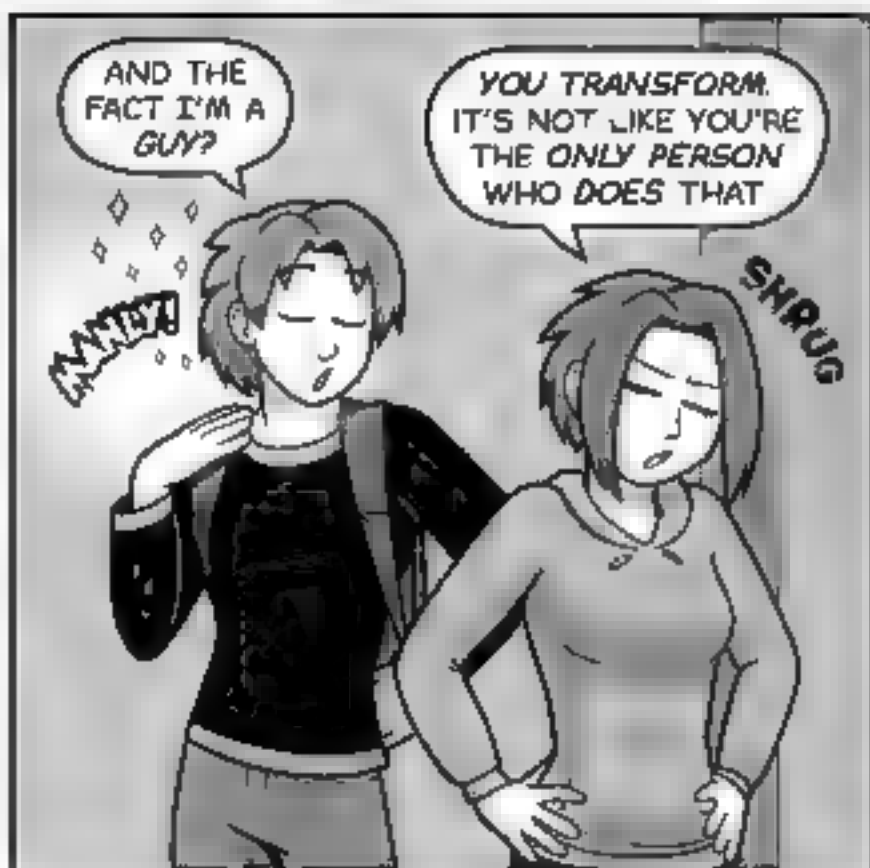


...AND BESIDES!
CHEERLEADRA
SAVED SOMEONE
WHILE I WAS
HERE ONCE!

AND THAT WASN'T
STAGED? OF COURSE
THE MAN COVERED UP
WHO YOU REALLY ARE.
THAT'S WHAT THEY DO.

WRIGHT
ALIGHT

DENIED



AND THE
FACT I'M A
GUY?

YOU TRANSFORM.
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'RE
THE ONLY PERSON
WHO DOES THAT

WRIGHT
ALIGHT

SHRUG



WHAT ARE.
WAIT... DO YOU
TRANSFORM?

NO, BUT YOU'D
TOTALLY BELIEVE
IT IF I SAID I DID
WOULDN'T YOU?



WHAT? NO. I MEAN, YES,
PFSH, IF... IF GRIFFINS
EXIST WHO'S TO SAY WHAT
ARE THE POSSIBLE THINGS?

YOU ARE
THE WORST
AT THIS.

HER EVIDENCE IS AS FLIMSY AS A HOUSE MADE OF BENDY STRAWS, BUT SHE'S RIGHT, AND I DON'T HAVE A POKER FACE!

DANG IT I NEED A SECRET IDENTITY FORM THAT'S JUST ME BUT GOOD AT LYING...!

EGGS ARE TINY ROCKS.

I SEE!

ASHLEY'S AS BAD A LIAR AS YOU, AND SHE'S BEEN WEIRDLY QUIET ABOUT YOUR FIRST TWO DATES...

...BUT AT LEAST SHE WAS SMILING AFTER THE FIRST ONE.

YOU'VE ALREADY DECIDED I'M CHEERLEADRA.

I CAN'T CONVINCE YOU OTHERWISE.

BUT I CAN TELL YOU THIS. ASHLEY WILL BE SAFE AT THIS PARTY NOT ONLY IS THERE NO CHANCE OF A REPEAT OF OUR SECOND DATE...

WE'RE HAVING THE PARTY AT THE HOUSE OF SOMEONE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT.

...AND THERE'LL BE FIVE SKILLED MARTIAL ARTISTS THERE INCLUDING MYSELF, AND THAT GUY WHO KICKED A FIRE PERSON INTO A RIVER.

THAT GUY WHO FOUGHT SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH CHEERLEADRA?

ERK! COINCIDENCE!

SO LEGIT LAW
ENFORCEMENT
OR CROOKED?

HUH?

SERIOUSLY? WHO'D GET
INTO LAW ENFORCEMENT
IF THEY DIDN'T WANT
TO HELP PEOPLE?

WHOEVER OWNS THE HOUSE,
ARE THEY CORRUPT AND PHONY,
OR ARE THEY ACTUALLY A
GOOD COP OR WHATEVER?

THIS ISN'T SOME
MOVIE WITH A LAZY
PLOT TWIST

...

I'D SAY YOU
CAN'T POSSIBLY BE
THAT NAIVE BUT I'VE
SEEN YOU LYING.

N-NO YOU HAVEN'T!
AND WHAT ARE YOU
TALKING ABOUT?

~SIGH~

FORGET ABOUT
IT. I GUESS THIS IS
THE BEST ANSWER
I'M GOING TO GET
OUT OF YOU

YOU CARE A
LOT ABOUT
ASHLEY,
DON'T YOU?

OF COURSE I DO! SHE'S MY
FRIEND! AND... AND SHE'S A
GOOD GIRL! AND SHE'S NOT A
PHONY, AT LEAST WHEN SHE'S
NOT COVERING FOR YOU!

SHE EVEN
HELPED ME QUIT
SMOKING.

ASHLEY HELPED YOU
QUIT SMOKING? HOW'S
THAT POSSIBLE? ARE YOU
EVEN EIGHTEEN?

YES, BUT
I STARTED
SMOKING
WHEN I WAS
SIXTEEN.

GASP

YEAH, YEAH,
BOY SCOUT BUT
RELAX. ASHLEY
HELPED ME QUIT
IT'S HOW WE
MET

HOW DO YOU
MEET SOMEONE
BY HELPING THEM
QUIT SMOKING?

I WAS ALL PISSED OFF
FROM WITHDRAWAL WHEN
I BUMPED INTO HER IN THE
HALLWAY IT WAS MY
FAULT, BUT I SHOUTED
AT HER ANYWAY

I STARTED
TO STORM OFF
WHEN SHE
SHOUTED AT
ME TO WAIT

I THOUGHT SHE WAS
GOING TO SNAP AT ME,
AND I FELT LIKE SNAPPING
BACK. BUT SHE ASKED ME
IF I WAS OKAY

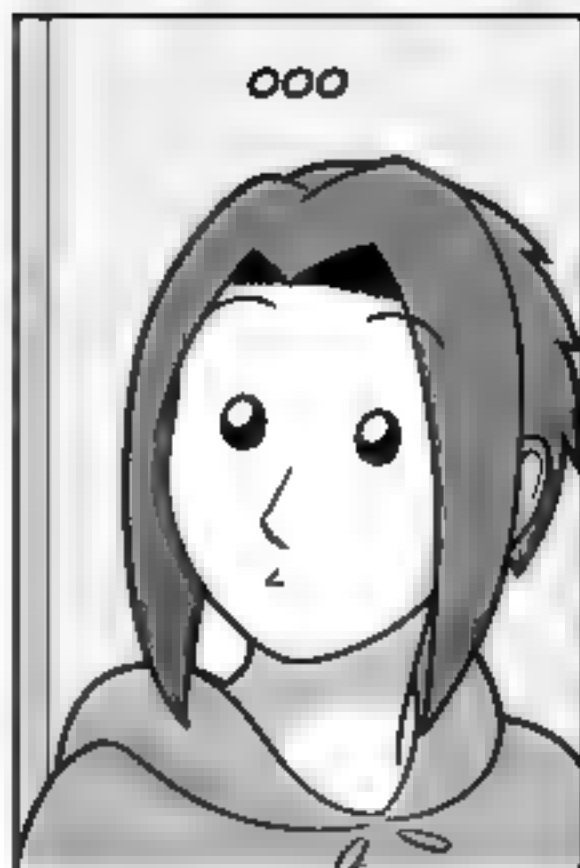


I WAS SO SURPRISED THAT
I COOLED OFF ENOUGH TO
TELL HER I WAS TRYING TO
QUIT SMOKING. THAT'S WHEN
SHE OFFERED TO HELP

SHE DIDN'T EVEN
KNOW MY NAME YET

THAT

...IS SO BADASS.



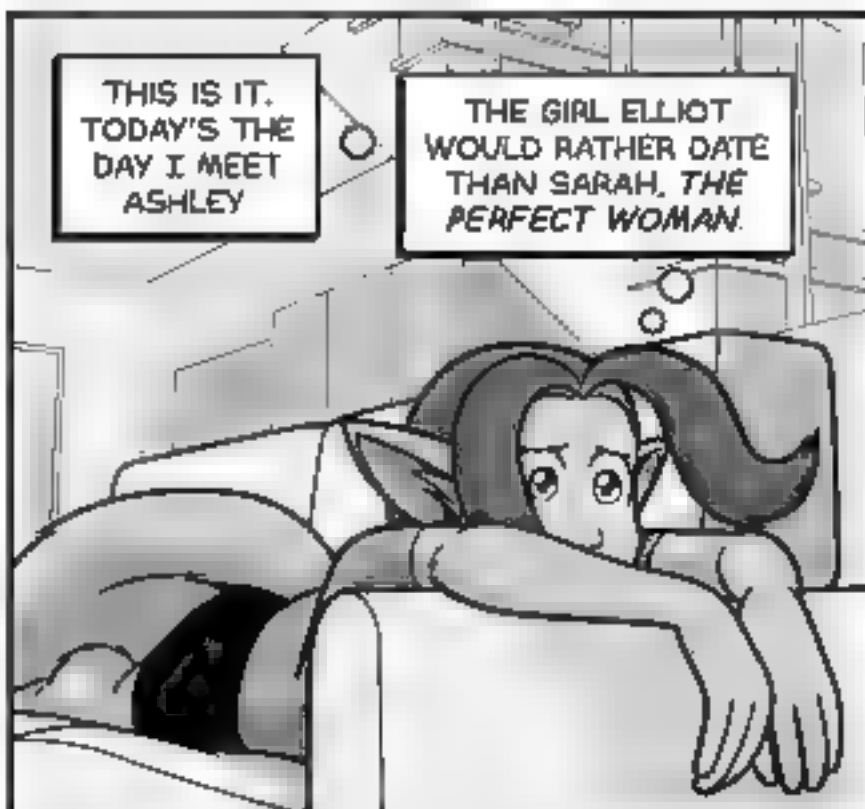


Next story comic Monday
(My apologies! Some writing to sort out)

OH CARP IT'S SATURDAY Y'ALL

THIS IS IT.
TODAY'S THE
DAY I MEET
ASHLEY

THE GIRL ELLIOT
WOULD RATHER DATE
THAN SARAH, THE
PERFECT WOMAN.



STOP THAT HE
THINKS OF HER LIKE
A SISTER, AND WHO
WOULDN'T WANT
SARAH AS A SISTER?

NOBODY,
THAT'S WHO.

UNLESS
THEY WANT TO
DATE HER

THIS GOT
COMPLICATED
QUICKLY



ALL I REALLY KNOW
ABOUT ASHLEY IS
THAT SHE'S "NICE"
WHATEVER THAT
ACTUALLY MEANS...

OH, YOU LIKE
SQUIRRELS? THAT'S
ADORABLE.



SHE KICKED A
SOCCER BALL AT A
GRIFFIN'S FACE.

HABA
HA!

RIGHT
IN THE
FACE!



...NANASE'S
SUSPICIOUS
OF HER...

ME?
EVIL?

OH HO
HO HO...!



AND SHE'S A
DRAGON-POWERED
WIZARD...

TREMBLE
BEFORE MY
POWER!



NO NO NO. SHE DOESN'T HAVE ANY
REAL POWER YET GRACE, AND NANASE
SAID SHE'S A GOODY-TWO-SHOES.

BUT SO ARE
PALADINS IN
ROLEPLAYING
GAMES, AND I'VE
HEARD A THING
OR TWO ABOUT
THEM AT THE
COMIC SHOP

THOUGH A LOT
OF THAT WAS
"THEY WON'T
LET MY THIEF
CHARACTER
STEAL THINGS"

OF COURSE, EVEN IF HER
SHOES ARE GOOD, THERE'S
THE OTHER THING.

...I'M NOT SAYING
NEVER TELL ASHLEY
ABOUT URYUOMS.

I'D LIKE TO SAY
THAT, BUT I KNOW
IT'S INEVITABLE IF
SHE'S GOING TO LEARN
MAGIC WITH YOU

I'M JUST SAYING, FOR NOW, AT
YOUR FIRST LITTLE GET-TOGETHER.

BE VAGUE
IF SHE ASKS
ABOUT THIS,
OR ANYTHING
ELSE TO
DO WITH
URYUOMS,
OKAY?

UM...

BE VAGUE IF YOU DO
ANYTHING WITH YOUR
ABILITIES, YES.

ARTHUR MADE
HER SOUND PRETTY
TIM'D BEST TO TAKE
THINGS SLOW

SO START ANY POTENTIAL
FRIENDSHIP WITH HIDING
WHO I REALLY AM.

YAAAAAAAY

B11
B11

A TEXT
MESSAGE?



SARAH!

HER DATE LAST
NIGHT! SAM JUST
WANTING TO BE
FRIENDS!

I'VE BEEN SO FOCUSED ON HOW
TERRIFYING AND NOT-SARAH ASHLEY
IS THAT I FORGOT ABOUT SARAH!

SOUNDS LIKE TEDD
LET HER IN. OKAY BE
READY TO HUG AND
SUPPORT AND...



...AND WHAT IF SAM
MENTIONED ME? I TOLD SAM
TO TALK TO SARAH ABOUT HIS
FEELINGS! WHAT IF SARAH
DOESN'T WANT A HUG?!
WHAT IF SHE WANTS TO
THROW A COUCH AT ME?!



HI, GRACE!



UM, HI?
HOW ARE
YOU?

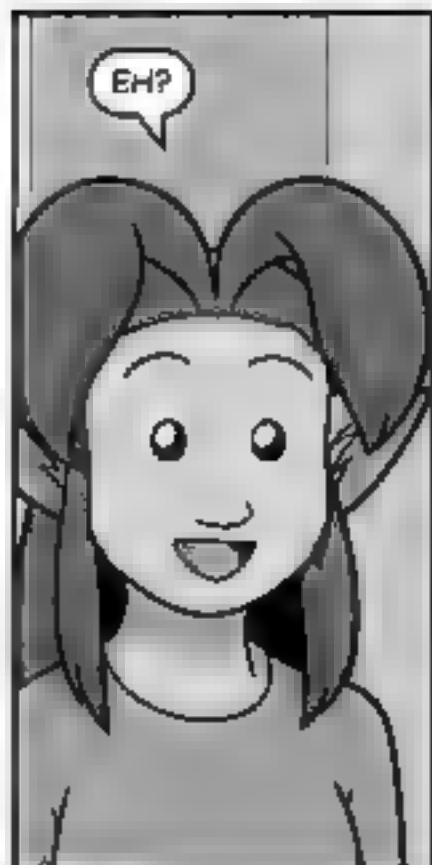


AWESOME!

I HAD THE
BEST DATE
LAST NIGHT!



EH?



SO... YOU DOING
OKAY ON THE
WHOLE "RAGE
AT THE WORLD"
THING?

YEAH. I'M...
I'M GOOD.
GOOD
ENOUGH.

I FOUND A LOT OF BAD
STORIES ABOUT POLICE
BUT I ALSO FOUND ONES
WHERE THEY HELPED
PEOPLE, WATCHED SOME
BROOKLYN NINE-NINE,
ATE SOME YOGURT...

ANYWAY, TODAY'S NOT ABOUT
THAT TODAY'S ABOUT A PARTY
AND MAYBE FUN MAGIC STUFF

ORRRR KEEPING
MAGIC TO A MINIMUM.

I DON'T KNOW

YOU WORRIED
ABOUT SCARING
ASHLEY WITH
TOO MUCH MAGIC
STUFF?

SORT OF? I DON'T KNOW
IF SHE'LL BE IN THE MOOD
FOR MAGIC STUFF AFTER,
Y'KNOW... THAT... STUFF
THAT HAPPENED...

...BUT IF SHE IS,
SHE REALLY LIKES
MAGIC AND
TRANSFORMATION,
ESPECIALLY
TRANSFORMATION.

LIKE, "THE
THOUGHT OF HER
AND TEDD HANGING
OUT IS ACTUALLY
SORT OF SCARY"
LIKES IT.

WHAT, YOU'RE
WORRIED SHE'LL
BE ATTRACTED
TO TEDD?

WHAT? NO! BECAUSE
OF ALL THE TRANSFOR-
MATION IDEAS THEY'LL
COME UP WITH!

OH. RIGHT OF
COURSE THERE'S
NO CHANCE OF
UM...

=COUGH=

Soon, outside Ashley's house.



IT'S NOT THAT I THINK ASHLEY'S EVIL, IT'S JUST... SHE BAFFLED ME. I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW ANYONE COULD SEE WHAT SHE SAW AND JUST BE LIKE "OH, YOU'LL TELL ME IF I NEED TO KNOW SOMETHING"

SHE COULD BE GENRE SAVVY

GENRE SAVVY?

YEAH, LIKE COPING WITH THE WEIRDNESS BY THINKING OF STORIES IN WHICH SIMILAR THINGS HAPPEN?

IT COULD'VE GIVEN HER A WAY TO PROCESS EVERYTHING WHILE ALSO MAKING HER OPEN TO THE IDEA OF PEOPLE KEEPING EACH OTHER'S MAGICAL SECRETS.

LIKE SECRET IDENTITIES AND SHARED SECRETS ARE PRETTY COMMON IN STORIES WITH POWERS AND MAGIC AND JUNK

MAYBE. BUT THE CONCLUSION I GET FROM THOSE STORIES IS TO ALWAYS INSIST ON BEING TOLD EVERYTHING.

OH, TOTALLY HALF OF ALL THE PROBLEMS IN THOSE STORIES COULD BE SOLVED WITH BETTER COMMUNICATION.

SOOOOOOOOO...
YOUR DATE WITH LUKE LAST NIGHT!
HOW'D IT GO?
HOW'D IT GO?

FIRST, LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING.

IS PART OF YOUR INTEREST DUE TO HAVING A THING FOR MALE-MALE RELATIONSHIPS, AND BEING SO EAGER TO HEAR ABOUT THEM THAT YOU DON'T REALIZE YOUR OWN RUDENESS AND INSENSITIVITY?

BECAUSE I LOVE THE ATTENTION AND AM EAGER TO TALK ABOUT ALL SORTS OF STUFF WITH YOU

...UH...

NOTED!
LET'S GAB.



SO DO YOU WANT TO HEAR ABOUT WHAT REALLY HAPPENED, OR THE WILDLY INACCURATE VERSION WITH JS FIGHTING OFF CLOTHES-TEARING NINJAS?

HM...

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED, BUT LET'S REVISIT THE NINJA VERSION LATER.

OKAY, SO EARLIER THIS WEEK, LUKE AND I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYTHING BEYOND "DINNER AND A MOVIE" FOR OUR DATE, BUT THEN DIANE, SUSAN'S *MAYBE-SISTER* OR WHATEVER, SUGGESTING BOWLING.

OOH, BOWLING! THAT'S A GOOD ONE. BEST AS A DOUBLE DATE, THOUGH

YEAH, THAT WAY IT'S NOT ALWAYS YOU OR YOUR DATE'S TURN TO BOWL.

DIANE ADMITTED TO BEING USED TO DOUBLE DATES.

DIANE ADMITTED TO THAT BEFORE THE DATE, ?

UM.. NO DURING THE DATE

DURING?

YEAH, SEE SHE HAD A BOWLING DATE TOO, AND WE BOTH AGREED TO NOT BOTHER THE OTHER IF WE SAW EACH OTHER, WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN EASY GIVEN THE SIZE OF THE PLACE AND ALL THE LANES.

YOU GUYS WOUND UP IN LANES RIGHT NEXT TO EACH OTHER, DIDN'T YOU

YEE-UP.



IT WAS WEIRD BEING RIGHT NEXT TO DIANE AND HER DATE, BUT IT WAS ALRIGHT. WE EVEN GOT A LITTLE COMPETITIVE FOR A BIT

BRING IT ON!

UM, YES! HA HA



HOW'D YOU AND LUKE DO?

WE HAD NO CHANCE I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY BOWLING DATES THEY'VE BEEN ON BUT I'M GUESSING A THOUSAND



BUT THEY SORT OF TOOK THE PRESSURE OFF I THINK THE OCCASIONAL BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN US HELPED KEEP THINGS RELAXED.

DIANE AND I EVEN WENT TO GET FOOD FOR ALL OF US TOGETHER WHICH WAS THE ONLY TIME SHE WEIRDED ME OUT



WEIRDED YOU OUT?

JH, YEAH, SO... I NEVER SAW THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN DIANE AND SUSAN, BECAUSE DIANE WAS A JERK IN VERY NOT-SUSAN WAYS?

NOW THAT SHE'S NOT BEING A JERK, I CAN SEE IT, AND IT'S LIKE AN *UNCANNY VALLEY* SITUATION?



LIKE, SHE'S LIKE SUSAN, BUT I CAN TELL SHE'S NOT SUSAN?

IT HELPS WHEN SHE'S DOING NON-SUSAN STUFF, LIKE BOWLING AND GETTING CLOSE WITH LUCY BUT SHE WAS AN EXTROVERTED *DOPPEL-SUSAN* AWAY FROM THE LANES



UM... OBVIOUSLY NOT A BIG DEAL, BUT... "LUCY"?

YEP DATING A GIRL



IN RETROSPECT, IT EXPLAINS A LOT ABOUT HER AND NANASE

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT AN OUTGOING BISEXUAL *DOPPEL* SUSAN THAT'S STRANGELY INTIMIDATING.

I KNOW, RIGHT?!





Meanwhile, drinking shakes









...AND SO THE NINJAS TORE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE BOWLING ALLEY, EXPERTLY SHREDDING THE CLOTHING OF ANY ATTRACTIVE MEN PRESENT WHILE LEAVING THEM UNHARMED, UNTIL THEY MADE THEIR WAY TO US, AND...



WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

LYING FOR ATTENTION.



SERIOUSLY?

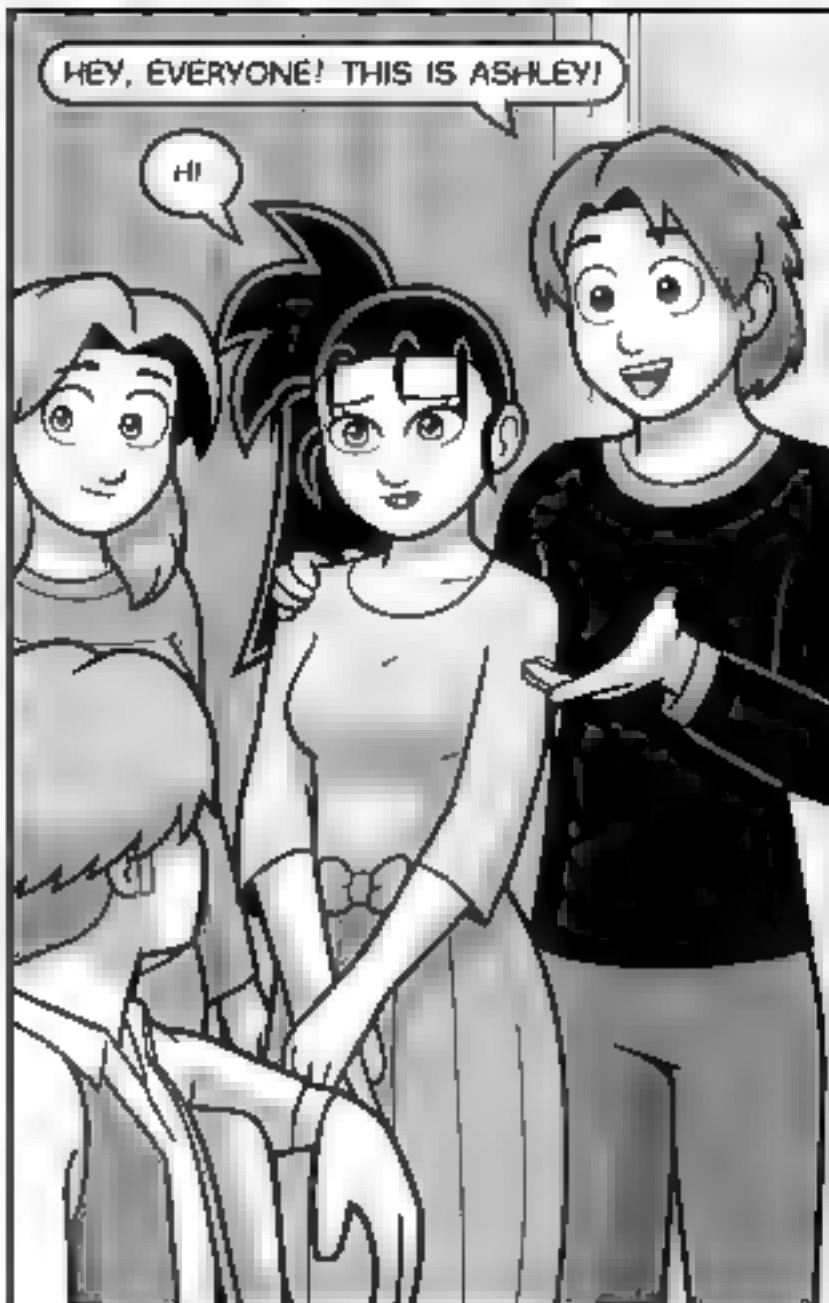
WHAT? IT'S FINE. SHE KNOWS I'M LYING.

NO I DON'T SHUT UP



HEY, EVERYONE! THIS IS ASHLEY!

HI



HEY I'M JUSTIN.

Hi I'M GRACE.

HEY

HI!



Hi! UM... I'M SORRY, BUT HAVE WE MET?

WHAT







SO, WAIT YOUR HAIR
TURNED BLACK WHEN
YOU LOST MAGIC?



IS *MAGIC* WHERE
MYSTERIOUS HAIR
AND EYE COLORS
COME FROM?!

"MYSTERIOUS" ...?

YOU REMEMBER, GRACE FROM
FRESHMAN BIOLOGY ?



YOU REMEMBER ELLEN, THAT
I WAS "HOMESCHOOLED"?

OH RIGHT



DON'T AIR
QUOTE THAT

"MYSTERIOUS" HAIR AND EYE
COLORS ARE CONTRARY TO WHAT
WE KNOW ABOUT HUMAN HAIR AND
GENETICS. AND DON'T MATCH WHAT
OUR GENES SUGGEST OUR HAIR AND
EYE COLORS SHOULD BE



MY RED HAIR
IS "MYSTERIOUS"
SO IS TEDD'S
PURPLE HAIR, AND
ELLEN'S GREEN
HAIR.

AND MY
FRIEND
LIZ'S
GREEN
HAIR!

THOUGH IT CAN
BE LESS OBVIOUS. LIKE A
BRUNETTE WITH GENES
FOR BLONDE HAIR.

PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD WILL
JUST HAVE THEM WITH NO GENETIC
EXPLANATION, SO SOMEONE WITH A
PHD DECIDED THEY WERE OFFICIALLY
"MYSTERRRRRIIIIOUUSSSS"



DARN IT,
"HOMESCHOOL"!
THAT'S NEAT
INFORMATION!



STILL
SHOULDN'T
AIR QUOTE
THAT

IT PROBABLY HAS *SOME-
THING* TO DO WITH MAGIC,
BUT GOOD SCIENCE DOESN'T
REACH CONCLUSIONS
WITHOUT TESTING IT...



...AND THERE'S NO
CORRELATION TO ANY-
THING LIKE MAGIC POWER
POTENTIAL THAT I'M
AWARE OF





HOW DO YOU
EVEN HAVE TIME
FOR AN AFTER
SCHOOL JOB?



IT'S PART
TIME IT'S NOT
LIKE I WORK
FORTY HOUR
WEEKS.

YEAH, BUT
WITH SCHOOL
AND EVERY-
THING? AREN'T
YOU STRETCHING
YOURSELF THIN?



GENETICS
DID THAT

WHAT ARE YOU...
OH, HILARIOUS.

SERIOUSLY, WHEN
DO YOU FIND TIME
FOR HOMEWORK?



I CAN ACTUALLY GET SOME
HOMEWORK DONE AT WORK.
IT'S SLOW MOST WEEKDAYS.



OH, WELL.
THAT'S GOOD.

AND YOU WORK AT THE
COMIC SHOP, TOO, GRACE?



MOSTLY JUST
FRIDAYS AND
SPECIAL EVENTS
FOR NOW

LIKE WHEN
NEW CARD
GAME SETS
COME OUT
AND STUFF



I'VE NEVER HAD AN
AFTER SCHOOL JOB,
BUT I USED TO HAVE
SOCCER AND BALLET...

SOCCER AND... HAVE
YOU COMBINED THEM
INTO A MARTIAL ART?

UM,
NO?

YOU
ABSOLUTELY
SHOULD.



FIRSTLY, I HAVE WATCHED *RANMA ONE HALF* (WELL READ THE MANGA), AND NO, THERE WASN'T ENOUGH MERGING OF VARIOUS INNOCUOUS THINGS WITH MARTIAL ARTS FOR IT TO BE THE BEST COMPARISON.

IT WAS MORE UNWITTINGLY UNLOCKING LATENT MAGIC TALENT WITH SPECIALIZED MARTIAL ARTS TRAINING. WHICH IS MORE *DRAGON BALL* TERRITORY

SECONDLY HOW ARE YOU A *RANMA ONE HALF* FAN AND NOT TURNED BALLET SOCCER INTO A MARTIAL ART?

THAT IS LEGITIMATELY WHAT ANYONE IN YOUR POSITION WOULD REASONABLY DO.

HEHE SO ARE YOU ALL MARTIAL ARTISTS?

BRO. I DON'T EVEN LIFT

WHICH I'M NOT SURE MARTIAL ARTISTS DO.

BECAUSE I'M NOT ONE.

I AM TREMENDOUSLY WEAK IT'S SOMETHING I SERIOUSLY NEED TO WORK ON.

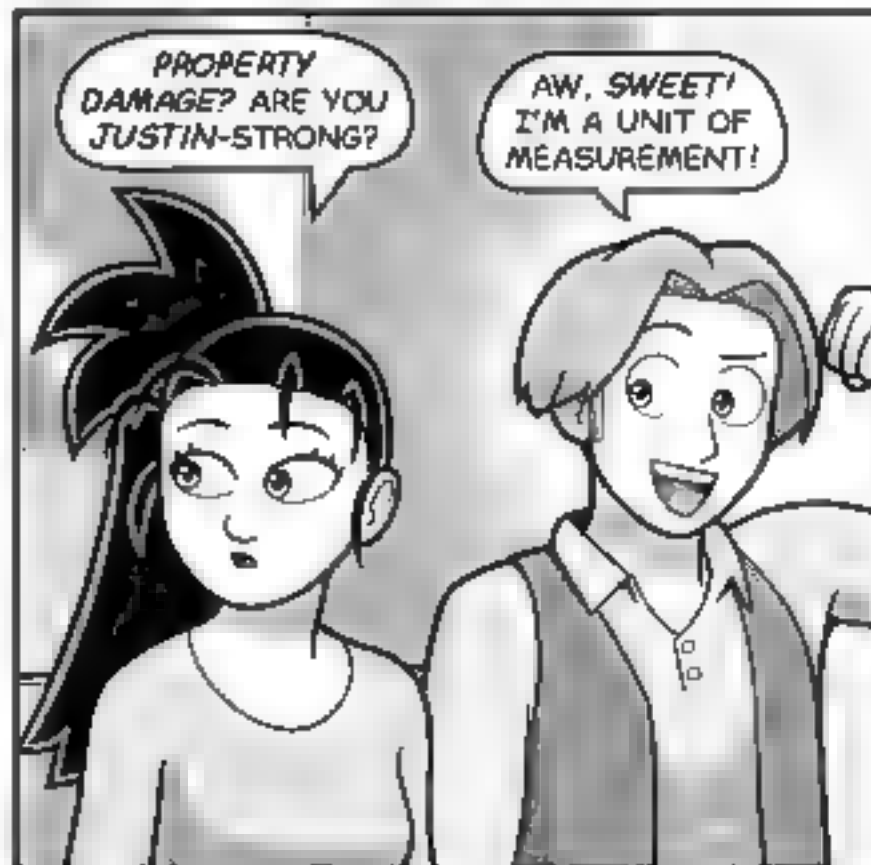
I COULD HELP YOU GET STARTED WITH AN EXERCISE ROUTINE

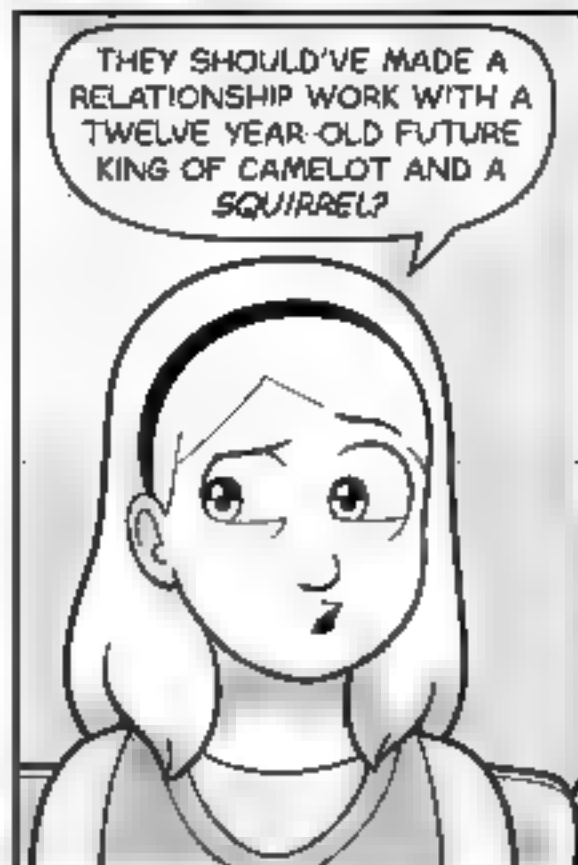
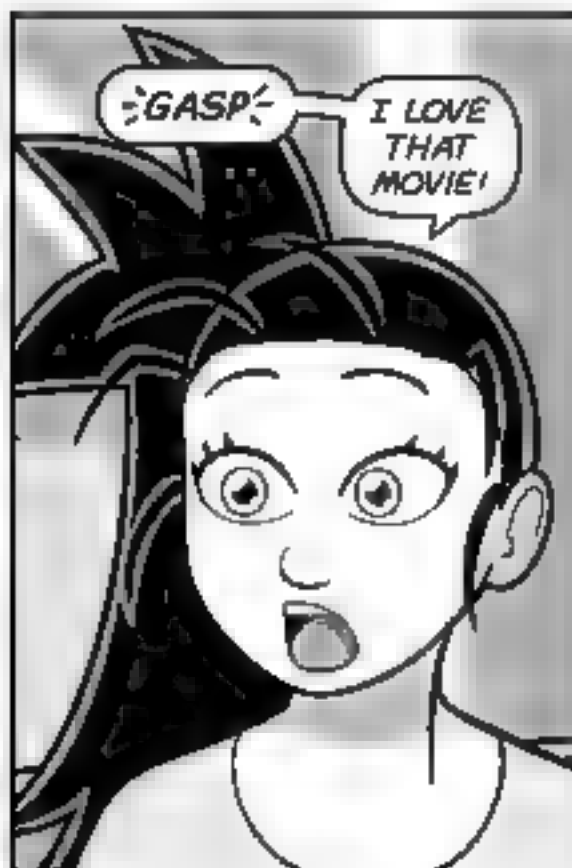
NO THAT'S TERRIFYING I DON'T WANNA

I'M A MARTIAL ARTIST!

I HAVEN'T MARTIAL ARTS'D OUTSIDE OF TRAINING, BUT KNOWING MY LUCK, IT'LL HAPPEN EVENTUALLY

I WORRY ABOUT THE PROPERTY DAMAGE





ANYWAY, I CAN'T
TURN INTO A FISH OR
A BIRD BUT I CAN
TOTALLY TURN INTO
A SQUIRREL!



YOU CAN?! THAT'S
AMAZING! CAN YOU
DO THAT BECAUSE
YOU REALLY LIKE
SQUIRRELS?



THAT BRINGS UP
AN INTERESTING
THING ABOUT...

I'M PART
SQUIRREL!



UH...

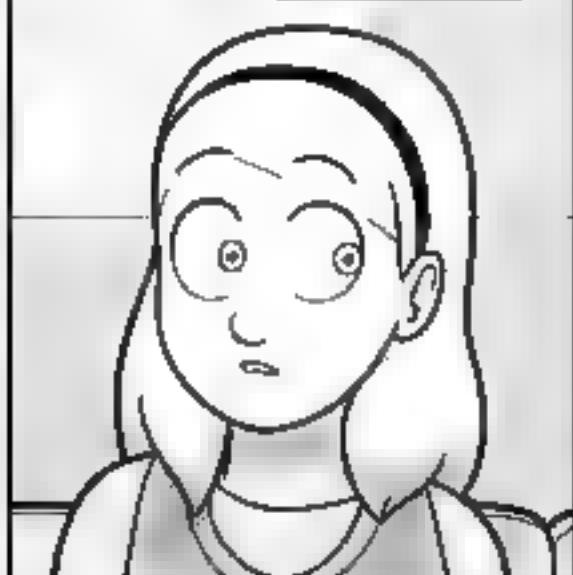
YOU ARE?! ~~:-GASP:-~~
ARE YOU FROM THE
SAME PLACE AS THE
GRIFFINS? A MYTHICAL
SQUIRREL GIRL?!



NO! I'M ACTUALLY
AN ALIEN-ALIEN-
HUMAN SQUIRREL
HYBRID! I DON'T KNOW
MUCH ABOUT THE
ALIENS THOUGH.



THAT'S
AMAZING! WAIT,
I'M SORRY! I
DON'T KNOW
HOW TRAGIC
YOUR PAST IS!



SUPER TRAGIC!
BUT IT'S OKAY!
I'M JUST SO
HAPPY I DON'T
HAVE TO HIDE
THIS FROM YOU!

YOU CAN
TELL ME
ANYTHING!

YOU CAN TELL
ME ANYTHING!
WANNA SEE ME
TURN INTO A
SQUIRREL?



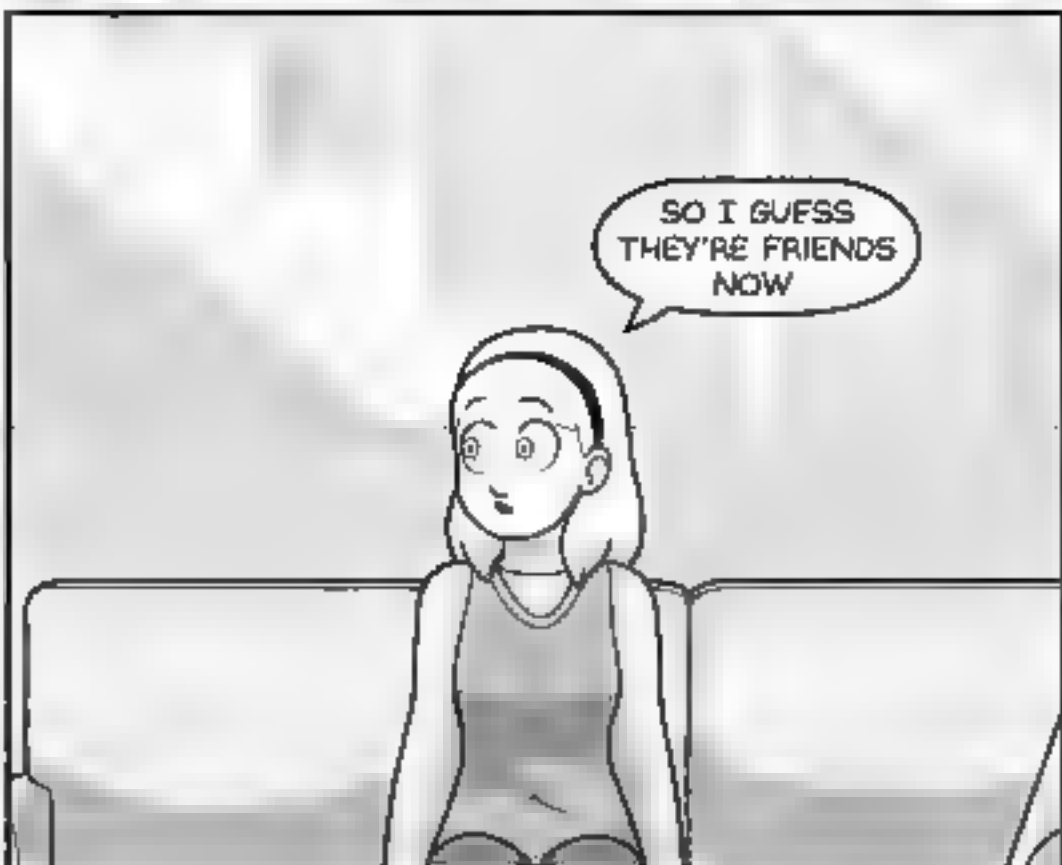
DEFINITELY!

SWEET! COME
ON, I'LL SHOW
YOU OVER BY
THE MIRROR!

AWESOME!



SO I GUESS
THEY'RE FRIENDS
NOW



DARE I SUGGEST
WE WATCH LEGALLY
BLONDE?

I THOUGHT YOU
WERE JOKING!

OH NO.

WHY WOULD ANYONE
JOKE ABOUT WANTING TO SEE
HERCULES IN NEW YORK?

BECAUSE IT'S
HERCULES IN
NEW YORK!

I'D BETTER PICK
SOMETHING SUSAN'S
ALREADY DRIFTED OVER
TO THE SCIENCE
FICTION SECTION.

QUACK!

PURSE!

ADORN!

STEALTH MODE

WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING?

EEEE--
SHHH

THAT'S MY SISTER
RHEA AND TWO OF
HER ROOMMATES
OVER BY THE DOOR!

OH, YOU HAVEN'T EXPLAINED YOUR CONVOLUTED
EXTENDED BIOLOGICAL FAMILY SITUATION YET,
AND IT'S DIFFICULT TO HIDE OUR RESEMBLANCE
IF SHE SEES US
SIDE-BY-SIDE

YOU PLANNED FOR
THIS POSSIBILITY BY
STORING A DISGUISE
IN YOUR PURSE

IT FEELS WEIRD
THAT YOU JUST
GOT THAT

I KNOW THAT FEELING.
ARE YOU ALSO HIDING
BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T
TOLD HER YOU'RE
DATING A GIRL?

WHAT? NO.
I TOLD HER AND
MY PARENTS THE
SAME DAY I GOT
TOGETHER WITH
LUCY

HOW???

THAT I HAVE TO
EXPLAIN? THAT SEEMS
LIKE IT SHOULD BE
SELF-EXPLANATORY

I KNOW
LITERALLY
HOW

I DON'T KEEP SECRETS FROM MY FAMILY
NOT ABOUT *IMPORTANT* STUFF NOT
NORMALLY I WANT TO TELL THEM ABOUT
YOU AND... EVERYTHING BUT I'M NOT READY

I'M NOT EVEN
SURE WHERE I'D
BEGIN. OR IF
THERE'S STUFF
I SHOULD LEAVE
OUT FOR THEIR
OWN SAFETY

I KNOW *THAT* FEELING TOO I HAVEN'T
TOLD MY MOTHER ANYTHING I HAVEN'T EVEN
TALKED TO MY FRIENDS ABOUT IT YET

YOU WHAT





DIANE THIS IS A PARTY WHERE PEOPLE ARE SUPPOSED TO FEEL FREE TO TALK ABOUT YOU KNOW

I DON'T, ACTUALLY? THERE ARE THINGS I WOULD GUESS, BUT GIVEN WHAT I ASSUME ABOUT THE GUEST LIST



NOT EVEN GOING TO GUESS WHERE YOUR MIND WENT THERE. *MAGIC STUFF*

OH, GEE, *MAGIC STUFF!* WOULDN'T WANT ME HEARING ABOUT THAT!



I MEAN, I KNOW NANASE AND ELLEN HAVE MAGIC

IT'S OBVIOUS ELLEN ISN'T SIMPLY "ELLIOT'S SISTER"

THAT FURRY GIRL WITH THREE TAILS AT NEW YEARS WAS CLEARLY GRACE...

I ALREADY KNOW ELLIOT'S CHEERLEADER...

EVERYONE KNOWS JUSTIN CAN DO A THING



AND WHEN YOU FINALLY TELL THEM EVERYTHING ABOUT THE MALL YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TELL THEM MY SECRET

IS THERE SERIOUSLY ANY REASON TO KEEP ME OUT OF THE LOOP AT THIS POINT?



BESIDES. YOU NEED TO STOP AVOIDING YOUR FRIENDS. AND I WAS THERE WITH YOU AT THE MALL

IF WE GO TOGETHER, AND YOU DECIDE TO OPEN UP, YOU WON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALONE

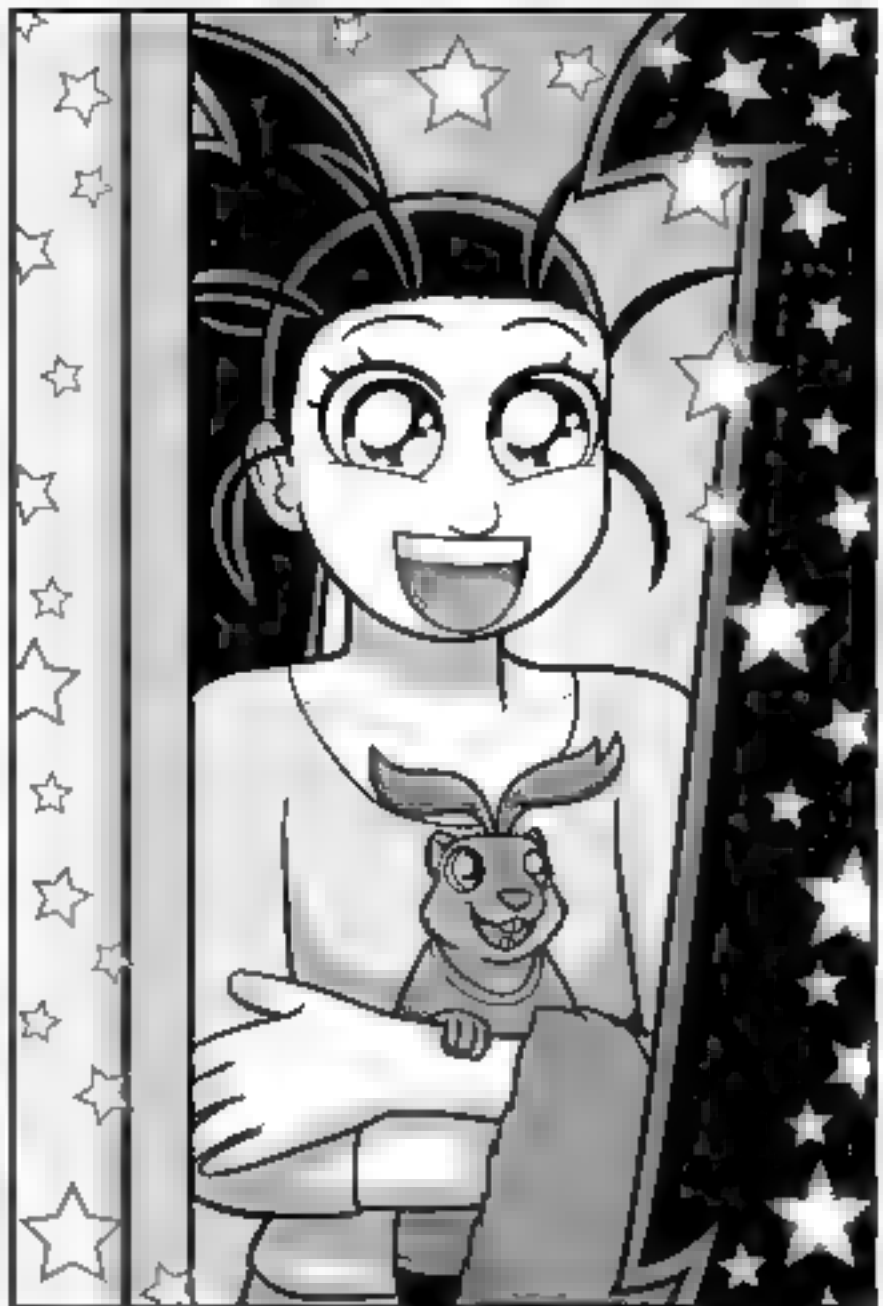


OH CRAP SORRY, I FORGOT ABOUT YOUR PHYSICAL CONTACT--



THING?







IT'S A SHAME
I CAN'T SHOW
OFF MY SPELL...

WHAT IS YOUR SPELL
AGAIN, EXACTLY? A
"WHAT IF" SIMULATION?

IN SOME WAYS, LIKE A
DECK THAT COULD BE DESCRIBED
AS "HOLOGRAPHIC"...?



IT'S A
SIMULATION OF
**FROZEN
TIME**

RIGHT, AND THEN YOU
CAN PLAY OUT "WHAT IF"
SCENARIOS, SO YOU CAN
SEE WHAT'LL HAPPEN IF
YOU TRY SOMETHING!



NO. I CAN IMAGINE STUFF HAPPENING
AND IT'LL SEEM LIKE IT'S HAPPENING BUT
IT WON'T PREDICT ANYTHING.

STUFF THAT'S
FROZEN WILL BE
ACCURATE, BUT
ANYTHING ELSE
IS JUST MY
IMAGINATION.

IF I ASKED
TIME STOP YOU
A QUESTION, AT
BEST, I'D JUST
IMAGINE YOU
REACTING HOW
I'D EXPECT YOU
TO REACT



OH. SO LESS PREDICTIVE "WHAT IF" MAGIC, AND
MORE A SNAPSHOT OF THAT MOMENT 'N WHICH
YOU CAN MESS AROUND WITH THE SNAPSHOT?

THAT SOUNDS RIGHT?

THEN I REMAIN
INCREDIBLY JEALOUS.



THAT WAS JUST...
INCREDIBLE! IT'S AMAZING
YOU CAN SHRINK AND
CHANGE THAT MUCH!

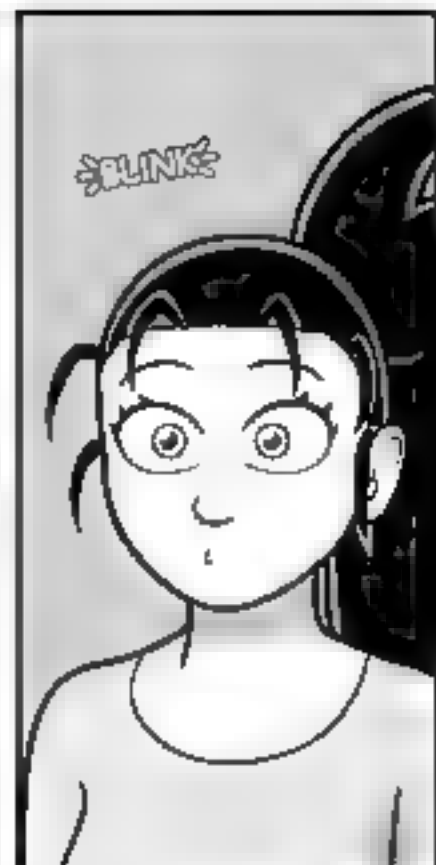
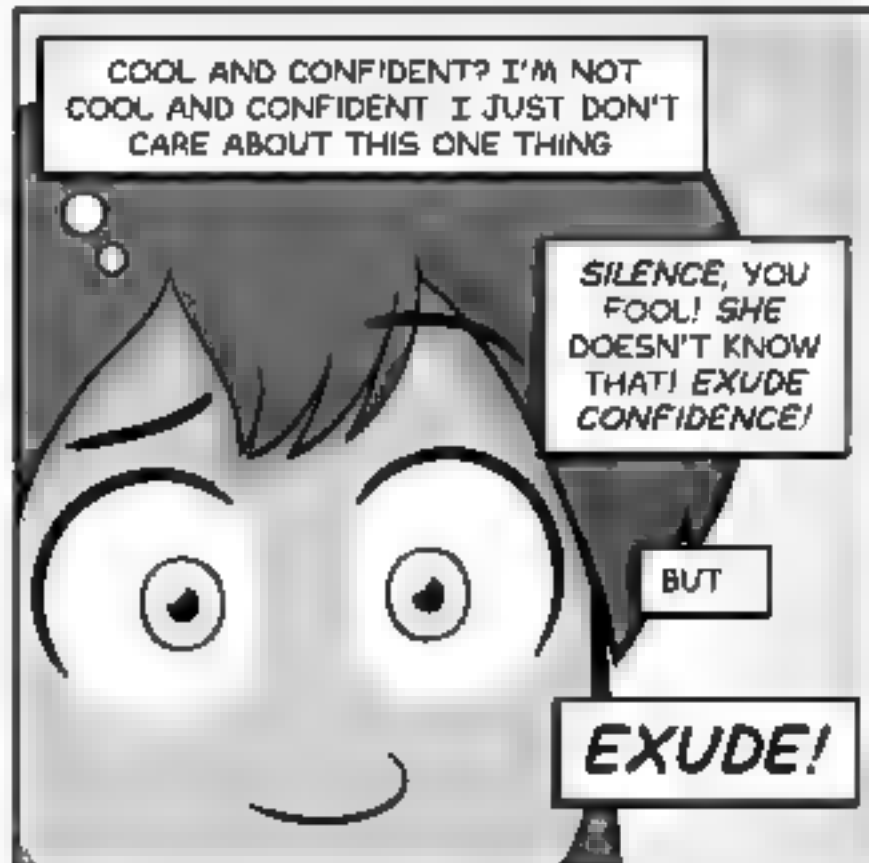
EVEN YOUR
CLOTHES
CHANGED TO
FIT YOUR
SQUIRRELLY
FORM!



YEAH, THAT SURPRISED ME. I
THOUGHT I'D SHRINK OUT OF
THEM GOING FULL SQUIRREL.

YOU
WHAT?

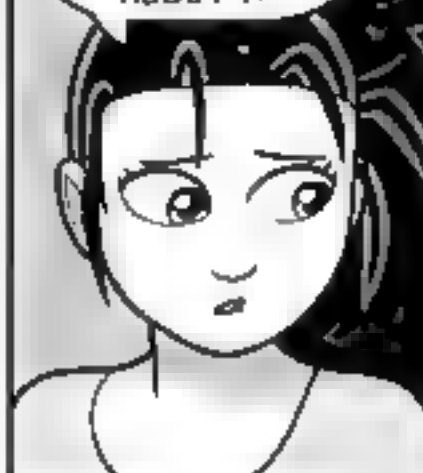




BUT ACTUAL
EMBARRASSMENT
FEELS AWFUL.

AS I'VE BEEN
DEMONSTRATING

IT'S WEIRD TO
HAVE FANTASIES
ABOUT IT



FANTASIES ARE A SAFE PLACE!
THE LACK OF REAL WORLD
CONSEQUENCES CAN FILTER OUT
THE NEGATIVE FEELINGS YOU'D
HAVE IF IT REALLY HAPPENED



LIKE HOW I CAN THROW FIRE
AT TURTLES IN VIDEO GAMES
AND IT'S TOTALLY FINE!

NOT EVERYONE'S GOING TO
FANTASIZE ABOUT THE SAME STUFF,
BUT FANTASIES RESULTING FROM
SUBCONSCIOUS ASSOCIATIONS AND
FILTERING OUT NEGATIVE STUFF?



THAT'S NOT
WEIRD. THAT'S
NORMAL.

I'VE... BEEN
TOLD THAT I
SHOULDN'T
APOLOGIZE FOR
BEING WEIRD
BEFORE, BUT...

I CAN'T
REMEMBER
BEING TOLD
I'M NOT
WEIRD



I GUESS A LOT OF
THINGS SEEM WEIRD
WHEN YOU DON'T BREAK
THEM DOWN INTO
SIMPLER COMPONENTS
LIKE THAT

LIKE SOCCER!

SOCCER?



YEAH! IMAGINE WATCHING
IT WITHOUT KNOWING IT WAS
A GAME. IT'D BE LIKE "WHAT ARE
THEY EVEN DOING? WHAT IS THIS
SUPPOSED TO ACCOMPLISH?"



"IS THIS SOME
FORM OF POLITICAL
DEBATE?"

RIGHT?!

SO I'M NO WEIRDER
THAN SOCCER.

EXACTLY!



THANK
YOU







SUSAN SAYS DIANE KNOWS A LOT ALREADY, AND THAT THEY ARE ACTUALLY FAMILY (WITHOUT SPECIFYING HOW), SO...

IT SEEMS LIKE MAYBE WE SHOULD LET HER? POSSIBLY?

OH! DIANE! POTENTIAL BUFFY, AND SUSAN'S MAYBE-SISTER?

I GUESS SHE COULD GET BUFF IF SHE WORKED AT IT, BUT...

BETWEEN WHAT SUSAN MIGHT HAVE TOLD HER, THE TIME WE'VE SPENT WITH HER, AND DIANE ACTUALLY BEING SOME SORT OF SUPER GENIUS DETECTIVE, SHE PROBABLY DOES KNOW A LOT ABOUT US, YES.

WHOOSH

INCLUDING THAT THE THREE-TAILED FURRY GIRL WHO SHOWED UP AT NEW YEARS WAS ME?

THREE TAILS?

PROBABLY IT'S NOT LIKE YOU DISGUISED YOUR VOICE OR ANYTHING

SCORE! YES! TEDD, SAY YES! YES YES YES!

DOING DOING DOING

UM, WELL, I WANT EVERYONE'S OPINIONS BEFORE I

WHOOSH

YOU GUYS ARE COOL WITH HER BEING HERE, RIGHT?

UH.

I GUESS. ?

I DON'T KNOW DIANE, AND THE IDEA OF A "DOPPELSUSAN" IS INTIMIDATING. BUT I'M NOT GOING TO TELL SUSAN NO BECAUSE OF THAT



I'M STILL WEIRDED OUT BY DIANE'S SIMILARITIES TO SUSAN, BUT THAT'S NOT A GOOD REASON TO SAY NO BESIDES, I WANT TO SEE SUSAN! IT'S BEEN WEEKS!



EVERYONE ELSE OKAY WITH HER COMING?

SURE.

YEAH.

YEP

WHOOSH

THERE YOU GO!

EVERYTHING'S OKAY!



OKAY COOL. I'LL JUST, UM, TEXT HER BACK.



IS SOME THING NOT OKAY?

I THOUGHT YOU WERE JUST WORRIED ABOUT US SAYING NO.



NO NO. IT'S FINE I'LL TEXT SUSAN BACK.

I JUST... I THINK I'M GOING TO GO CHANGE BEFORE THEY GET HERE...





CHANGE?



YEAH, UH.
DIFFERENT OUTFIT,
AND UH..



YOU'RE PERFECT JUST AS YOU ARE



IF IT HELPS I'LL
TRANSFORM, TOO



THAT'S, UH... ~~ERHEM?~~ I'LL
JUST TEXT SUSAN. I WON'T
BE CHANGING AFTER ALL.

YOU
SURE?



YES. TOTALLY SURE. THANK
YOU I'LL JUST... UH.

THERE'S A CAKE I
SHOULD MAKE SURE
IT'S STILL THERE

BECAUSE,
UH... BEARS?





SO WHAT'S THE OCCASION FOR THIS PARTY? JUST A "SOMEONE'S GOT THE HOUSE FREE LET'S GO NUTS WITH BOOZE AND MAGIC" THING?

SKOTS!

MAGIC!

NOTHING COULD GO WRONG!



FIRST OF ALL, I DOUBT THERE'LL BE ALCOHOL.

OF COURSE THERE WON'T

SECONDLY, NO. IT'S ABOUT ASHLEY GETTING TO KNOW PEOPLE SHE CAN TALK TO ABOUT MAGIC



WHILE WE WERE... AT THE MALL, ELLIOT, ELLEN AND ASHLEY WERE KIDNAPPED BY A VAMPIRE AND AN ALTERNATE UNIVERSE VERSION OF ELLIOT.

WHAT



I DON'T KNOW ALL THE DETAILS. HE SUMMARIZED IT BRIEFLY AT SCHOOL, BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN SEEING ANYONE OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL. SO...

THAT SEEMS LIKE A THING YOU MAKE AN EXTRA EFFORT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT...?!



EVERYONE WAS OKAY, ELLIOT WAS GIVING ME MY SPACE, AND I GAVE HIM HIS. IF HE WANTED TO TALK ABOUT IT MORE, I WOULD HAVE LISTENED.

WHICH I TOLD HIM I WOULD. BY THE WAY



OKAY BUT...

YOU BASICALLY KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, RIGHT?

I WANT TO SAY "YES", BUT IF NOT FOR SPACE GIVING I WOULD HAVE HAD ABOUT TEN THOUSAND QUESTIONS.

SO. UM. HOW
DO YOU LIKE EVERY-
ONE SO FAR?

I THINK I'M
IN LOVE WITH
GRACE

WHAT

NOT IN A
ROMANTIC
WAY!
FRIENDSHIP
LOVE!

I FRIEND-SHIP
MYSELF WITH HER!

LIKE, SHE'S SO NICE AND COOL
AND SMART AND I JUST WANT TO
HAVE A PAJAMA SLEEPOVER WITH
HER AND BRUSH HER HAIR..!

ARE YOU
SURE THIS IS
PLATONIC?

AT THE RISK OF
GIVING MYSELF A
LABEL, I'M PRETTY
SURE I'M HETERO-
ROMANTIC.

I'M NOT
INTERESTED
IN ACTUALLY
DATING
WOMEN.

PROBABLY

I THINK.

UH-UH. BUT DATING A
MAN WHO'S SOMETIMES
A WOMAN?

I MIGHT LIKE
THAT IDEA. YES.

EVERYONE ELSE SEEM
PRETTY COOL, TOO

THOUGH I'M
PRETTY SURE
NANASE'S BEEN
HITTING ON ME.







YOU CAN DO THIS, TEDD! YOU ARE A STRONG INDEPENDENT WOMAN WHO NEEDS NO DIANE!

I KNOW THAT MAKES NO SENSE BUT YOU GET THE SENTIMENT!

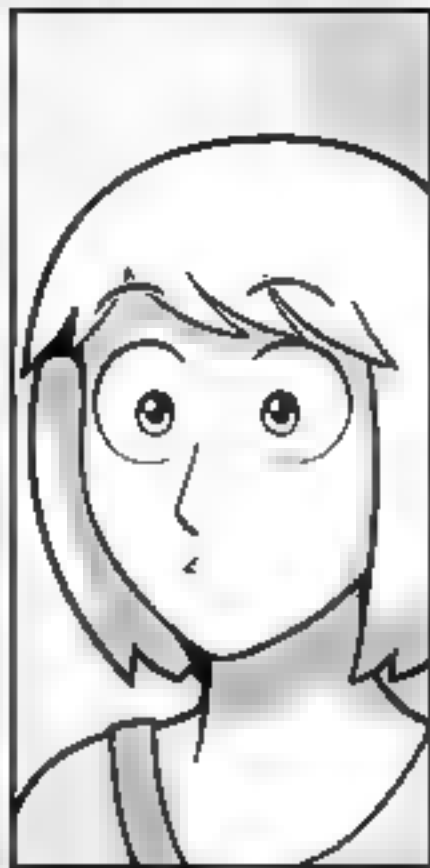
R-RIGHT



WELCOME! HELLO!



UH, HI. GRACE, YOU KNOW DIANE DIANE THIS IS TEDD. TEDD, DIANE.



HELLO. I LIKE YOUR HAIR.



OH! UH THANK YOU! I LIKE YOURS, TOO

THANK YOU



SUSAN, UH... YOU KNOW WHERE THE BASEMENT IS.

GRACE AND I WILL BE DOWN IN A MINUTE, OKAY?

VERY WELL.



IS SOMETHING UP?



I DON'T THINK DANE KNOWS I'M USUALLY A GUY!

I FEEL COMPELLED TO NOTE THAT I'M NOT SURE WHICH GENDER YOU SPEND MORE TIME AS THESE DAYS BUT PLEASE DO NOT MISTAKE THAT FOR MISSING YOUR MEANING



SHE GOT A LOOK ON HER FACE LIKE SHE WAS EXPECTING A GUY BUT THAT WAS IT!

I THINK SHE THINKS SHE JUST ASSUMED WRONG!



SHE THINKS I'M ALWAYS A GIRL!



WHICH MEANS YOU CAN CHOOSE WHETHER TO TELL HER YOU'RE GENDER FLUID AND TRANSFORM, OR LET HER THINK YOU'RE ALWAYS A GIRL.

AND YOU'RE DEFINITELY GOING TO GO WITH THE LATTER



I KNOW IT COULD BACKFIRE, BUT THIS IS LIKE A DREAM COME TRUE FOR ME. ONE THOUSAND PERCENT LET HER THINK I'M ALWAYS A GIRL

I'M BEHIND YOU TWELVE THOUSAND PERCENT!



THOUGH SHE COULD HAVE HEARD ME SAY I HAVE A BOYFRIEND BEFORE, SO I MIGHT HAVE TO MAKE UP AN EX-BOYFRIEND

I HAVE NAMED HIM TYRONE. AND HE IS DEAD TO ME



SUZE!

SUSAN.

UM, HELLO. I
ASSUME SOME-
THING IS BE NG
REFERENCED
AND JUSTIN IS
TO BLAME?

CHEERS.

YOU'RE
WELCOME?



ANYWAY I BELIEVE EVERYONE
HERE BUT SARAH HAS MET DIANE?
SARAH, DIANE. DIANE SARAH.

HELLO!



Hi!

OH MY GOSH
SHE'S A CUTE
MINI- SUSAN
WITH SHORT
HAIR THIS IS
SO WEIRD.



OKAY JUSTIN
THEY'RE SIDE BY
SIDE FOCUS ON
THE DIFFERENCES.

TALL
AND NOT
SO TALL.

LIGHT
HAIR
AND
DARK
HAIR.

YIN
AND
YANG.



NO DON'T
PICTURE THEM
AS NINJAS
WHAT ARE
YOU DOING

ACTUALLY NO,
THIS HELPS



ANYWAY SORRY, ABOUT CRASHING I KNOW YOU'RE DOING A SORT OF "TALK FREELY ABOUT MAGIC" THING AND I DON'T HAVE ANY OF MY OWN. BUT



I AM A TRAINED CHEERLEADER, AND I CAN TOTALLY CHEER ON WHATEVER COOL STUFF YOU GUYS CAN DO!



SHE'S A CHEERLEADER, TOO?!

THOUGH I'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT JUMPING IN HERE...



DO YOU WANT TO CAST SOME MAGIC?



UM... YEAH?



CATCH!

IS THIS... A DRUMSTICK?



IT WAS, ONCE. NOW IT IS MORE

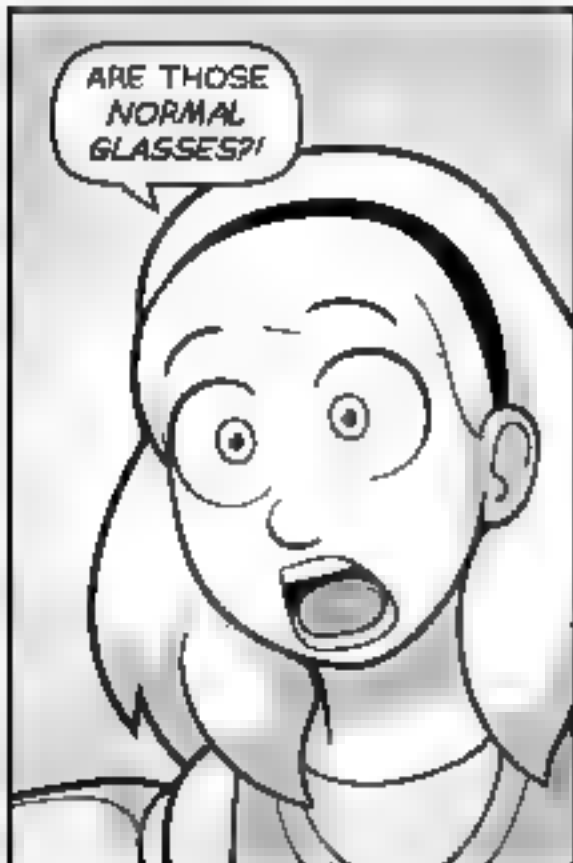
I AM A WAND MAKER.

ALSO, AS IT TURNS OUT, A BIT NEAR-SIGHTED





IS THIS.
A MAGIC
WAND?!



ARE THOSE
NORMAL
GLASSES?!



YEAH. JUST
GOT THEM
YESTERDAY

I'VE BEEN A
LITTLE NERVOUS
ABOUT SHOWING
EVERYONE...



WELL, THEY LOOK
VERY NICE ON YOU.

NOW ABOUT THIS--



YEAH THEY
LOOK GREAT!

YEAH!

THEY DO, BUT
I'M SURPRISED
YOU DON'T
JUST "MAGIC"
YOUR VISION.



I CAN, BUT I HAVE A
HYPOTHESIS THAT, LONG
TERM, CORRECTING WITH
MAGIC TOO OFTEN COULD
MAKE MY EYESIGHT WORSE
WHEN NOT ENCHANTED.



SPEAKING OF MAGIC.



HUGS FOR FOUR-EYES, HERE!



I'M BEING TROLLED, AREN'T I.

SOMEONE HERE IS A DRUMMER. AND THIS IS JUST A DRUMSTICK.



SORRY ABOUT THAT I WAS ACTUALLY TRYING TO GET EVERYONE TO FOCUS ON THE WAND INSTEAD OF MY GLASSES, BUT...

A-ANYWAY, THAT IS A MAGIC WAND.



OH. SO... YOU CAN TURN STICKS INTO MAGIC WANDS, AND YOU USE DRUMSTICKS BECAUSE THEY'RE RELATIVELY STURDY AND CHEAP?



BASICALLY A LUCKY BONUS TO USING DRUMSTICKS I DIDN'T THINK OF UNTIL I GOT THEM, THOUGH, IS THE TIP

WHY DOES THE TIP MATTER?



IT DOESN'T REALLY BUT IN THE INTEREST OF SAFETY, AND KEEPING EVERYONE COMFORTABLE. THIS WAND'S SPELLS ARE VERY CLOSE RANGE

WHETHER CASTING A SPELL ON YOURSELF OR SOMEONE ELSE, THAT TIP HAS TO BE TOUCHING WHOEVER'S BEING ENCHANTED



YOU ALSO HAVE TO SAY A CODE PHRASE IN INTERNET-TRANSLATED LATIN WHILE KEEPING THAT CONTACT, AND PEOPLE WHO KNOW A SPELL IS COMING GET A BOOST TO SPELL RESISTANCE, SO YEAH.

VERY DIFFICULT TO ENCHANT ANYONE BY ACCIDENT, OR AGAINST SOMEONE'S WISHES



SO THERE'S NOT MUCH CHANCE OF ANYONE ACCIDENTALLY TRANSFORMING ME IN SOME EMBARRASSING WAY?

ALMOST NO CHANCE!

GOOD!



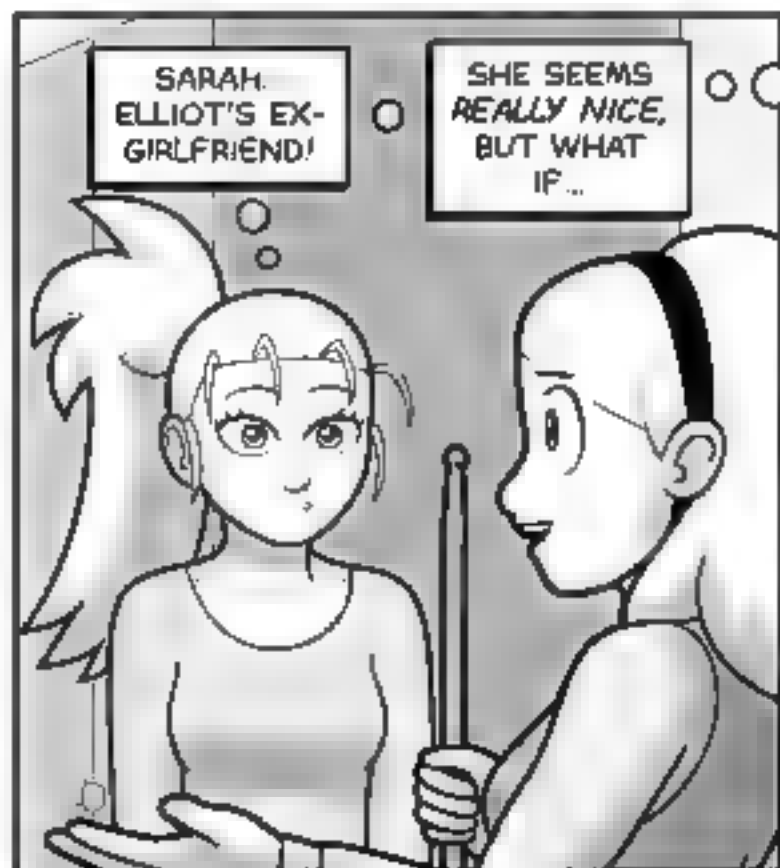




Next story comic Monday, November 25th

Details on why in commentary Friday EGSNP as normal!





THERE IS A SHRINK SPELL!

AMPLIO DECRESCO!

IT CAN SHRINK OR GROW, BUT LIKE WITH HAIR COLOR, THE CASTER JUST IMAGINES WHAT THEY WANT!

SHRINKING SEEMS LIKE AN INCREDIBLY BAD IDEA THAT NO ONE WOULD RATIONALLY WANT

UNLESS WE'RE TALKING LIKE A COUPLE PERCENT SMALLER, OR A HEIGHT ADJUSTMENT?

IT CHANGES SIZE ALL AROUND, BUT ONLY BETWEEN HALF AND DOUBLE-SIZED.

I'M AFRAID TO ASK HOW YOU TESTED THAT

WELL, AH, I HAVEN'T.

...BUT MY DAD'S TOLD ME ABOUT SIZE CHANGE MAGIC ..

AND SHRINKING WITH MAGIC LIKE THIS INCREASES DURABILITY, SO IT'S SAFER THAN YOU'D THINK!

ADRENALINE

I'M GOING TO BE SHRUNK BY MY BOYFRIEND'S EX-GIRLFRIEND! YES! BUT WHAT ABOUT CLOTHES? SHE'D WARN ABOUT SHRINKING OUT OF THEM, BUT MAYBE THEY'RE USED TO EVERYONE KNOWING? I SHOULD ASK JUST IN CASE THAT'S THE

SOUNDS GOOD! GO AHEAD! AMPLIO DECRESCO!

ASHLEY SEEMS EXCITED ABOUT SIZE CHANGE MAGIC, SO WHY DIDN'T SHE LIKE MY FAIRY DOLL MORE?

WAIT! THAT'S IT!

THE FAIRY DOLL WAS TOO COOL! SHE JUST DIDN'T WANT TO BE WEIRD ABOUT IT!

MYSTERY SOLVED

ASHLEY ARE YOU OKAY?

UH.
YEAH.
UH.

TEDD. I THOUGHT YOU TESTED EVERY SPELL THE WAND CAN CAST!

I DID! BUT... YOU IMAGINE A SIZE WHEN CASTING THE SPELL, AND I HAD EXPECTATIONS.

I'M SORRY! I MUST HAVE CONTAMINATED MY RESULTS WITH BIAS! I DID BAD SCIENCE!

SO... WAIT. SARAH, HOW SMALL DID YOU IMAGINE ASHLEY SHRINKING?

I THOUGHT SHE'D STOP AT THE LIMIT, SO I JUST IMAGINED HER DOLL-SIZED.

SMALLER THAN THIS... WHICH MEANS *THIS* IS THE ACTUAL LIMIT! TWELVE POINT FIVE PERCENT SIZE, NOT FIFTY-PERCENT--

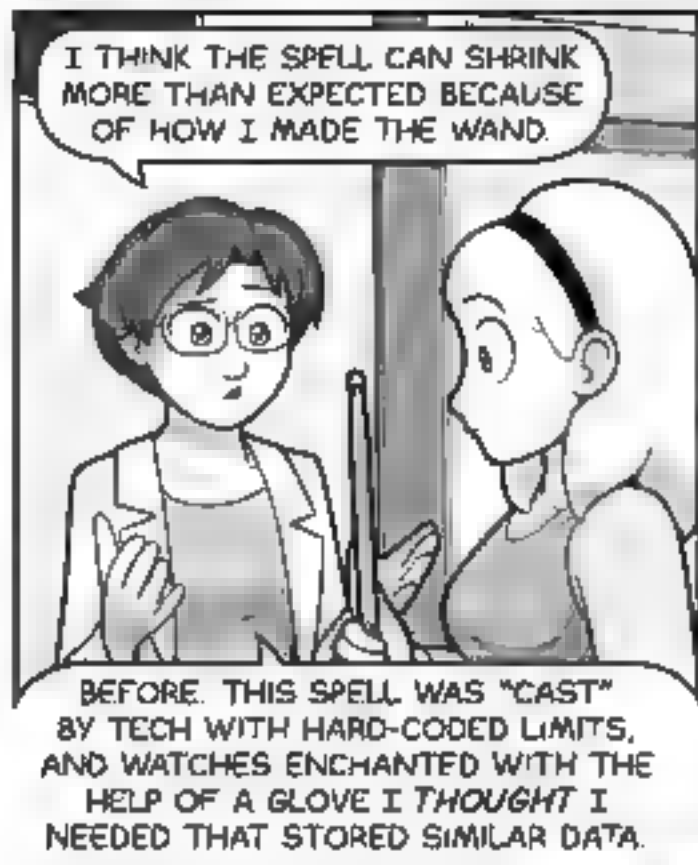
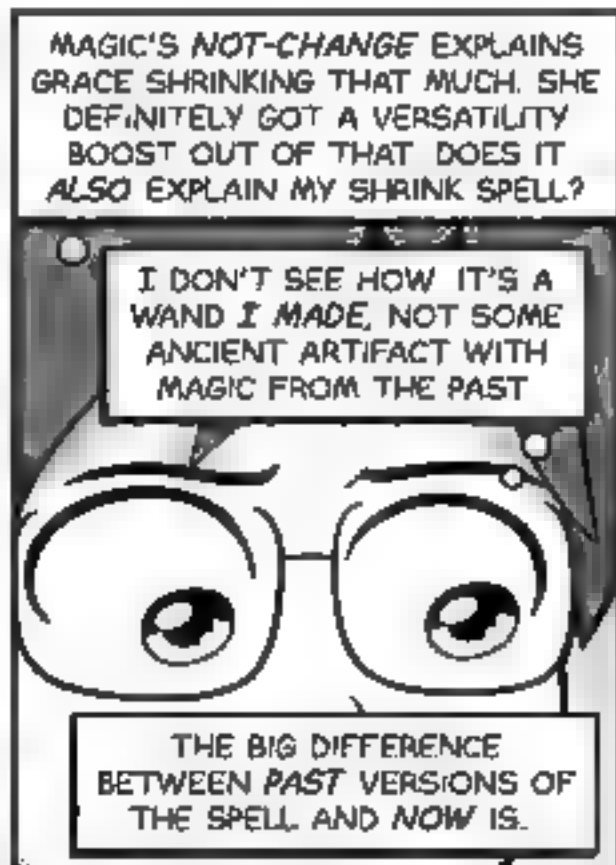
BACK OFF!

Y'ALL ARE *HUGE* AND SCARY AND ASHLEY IS VERY SMALL!

LET'S JUST US LITTLE LADIES GO TO THE SOFA FOR A MINUTE OKAY? CATCH A BREATH?

YES PLEASE THANK YOU

NO PROBLEM. A SQUIRREL KNOWS THAT FEELING











SARAH?! WHAT?! DANGEROUS! WHAT?!

I SAT DOWN FIRST?



WHAT'S GOING ON NOWHOA

NOWHOA?



JUST HOW BIG DID YOU IMAGINE YOURSELF GETTING?!

I FIGURED I WOULDN'T GROW MORE THAN TWICE AS BIG, SO I JUST TRIED TO IMAGINE TWELVE FEET.



SOLID PLAN.

SOME-ONE HAD TO TEST IT.

GOOD SCIENCE.

NO! BAD SCIENCE!



DO YOU REALLY THINK THERE WAS A RISK OF HER OUTGROWING THE ROOM WHILE SITTING?



GIRL, IT'S A PARTY! SARAH'S GOT THE RIGHT IDEA! IF STUFF NEEDS TESTING, LET'S GET EXPERIMENTAL!



Zounds!

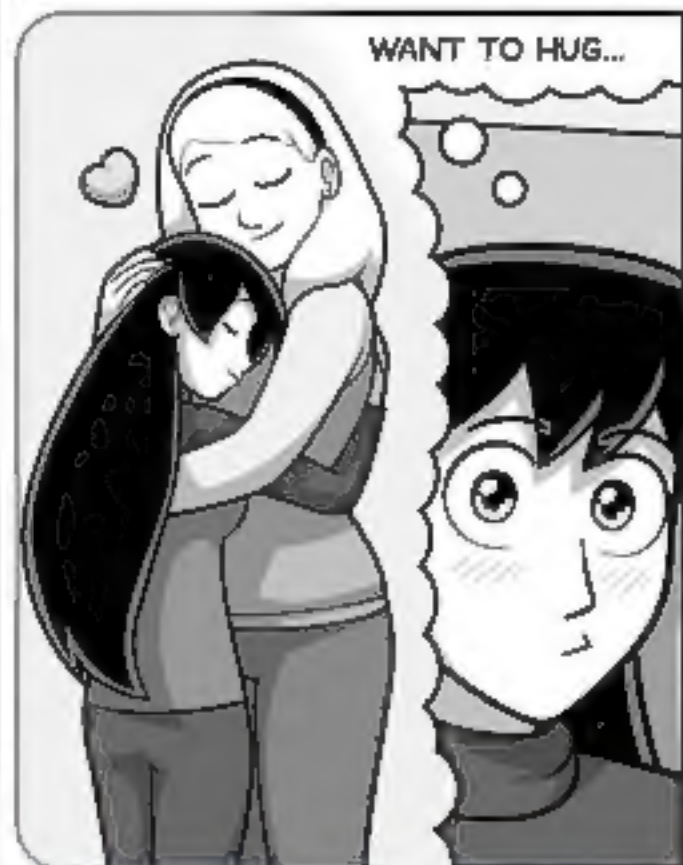
Have at you!

Careful Science

Women Feeling Experimental



NOT A PROBABLE RISK, BUT THE POSSIBILITY EXISTED! WE NEED TO APPROACH THIS SCIENTIFICALLY! OR AS SCIENTIFICALLY AS WE CAN WITHOUT A LARGE SAMPLE SIZE AND CONTROL GROUPS AND SUCH.



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Next Story and EGSNP comics Monday, December 30

I apologize for the delay, but Santa Ellen insisted I take a break.

Happy Holidays!



